

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

Chairperson
Ms. Erna Braun
Constituency of Rossmere

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
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REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
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WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
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

Monday, September 9, 2013

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park)

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Messrs. Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Hon. Ms. Marcelino

Ms. Braun, Messrs. Briese, Caldwell, Ewasko, Graydon, Marcelino, Nevakshonoff, Pedersen

APPEARING:

Hon. Jennifer Howard, MLA for Fort Rouge

Hon. Jon Gerrard, MLA for River Heights

Mr. Ralph Eichler, MLA for Lakeside

Mr. Cliff Cullen, MLA for Spruce Woods

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Mr. Doug Dobrowolski, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Mr. Rick Pauls, Amalgamated Municipalities of Killarney-Turtle Mountain

Ms. Debbie McMechan, Rural Municipality of Edward

Ms. Olive McKean, Rural Municipality of Miniota

Mr. Larry Oakden, Town of Hamiota

Mr. Cliff Kutzan, Rural Municipality of Grandview

Ms. Susan Stein, Town of Plum Coulee

Mr. Archie Heinrichs, private citizen

Ms. June Letkeman, private citizen

Mr. Steve Martens, private citizen

Mr. Lloyd Penner, private citizen

Mr. Wayne Reimer, private citizen

Mr. Jack Wiebe, private citizen

Mr. Rick Gamble, Village of Dunnottar

Mr. Philip Thordarson, Rural Municipality of Lakeview

Ms. Karin Boyd, private citizen

Mr. Tom Farrell, private citizen

Mr. Robert Campbell, private citizen

Mr. Ray Franzmann, Rural Municipality of Grey

Mr. David Sutherland, private citizen

Ms. Holly Krysko, private citizen

Ms. Phyllis Thordarson, private citizen

Mr. Melvin Klassen, Town of Altona

Mr. Kevin Ateah, private citizen

Ms. Joannie Halas, private citizen

Mr. Jim Pringle, private citizen

Mr. Kerry Knudson, private citizen

Mr. Charles Chappell, Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach

Ms. Kathleen McKibbin, private citizen

Ms. Penny McMorris, private citizen

Mr. Mike Mason, private citizen

Mr. Brian Hodgson, Victoria Beach Cottage Owners Association

Mr. Ivan McMorris, private citizen

Mr. Garrett Surcon, private citizen

Ms. Jennifer Sime, private citizen

Mr. Vic Janzen, private citizen

Mr. Brian Glowacki, private citizen

Ms. Joanne Gibson, private citizen

Mr. Bruce Ball, private citizen

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Pam Gordon, private citizen

Gordon Tomlin, private citizen

Jennifer Engbrecht, private citizen

Walter Tymchuk, private citizen

Glen and Sharon Torgerson, private citizens

Peter Ingram, private citizen

John R. Gow, private citizen

Ron and Sherill Zellis, private citizens

Dick and Elaine Archer, private citizens

Elizabeth Deacon, private citizen

Murray Davies and Doreen Stapleton, Rural Municipality of Harrison

Donna Thain, private citizen

Marjorie Birley, private citizen

Graham and Allison Bloomer, private citizens

Joyce Ramsay, private citizen

Fran Allary, private citizen

Sally Lawler, private citizen

Fred Taylor, Rural Municipality of Lawrence

Brad Coe, Rural Municipality of Cameron

Dennis Forbes, Rural Municipality of Dauphin

Beverley Underhill, private citizen
Bob Conibear, Rural Municipality of Argyle
Ab and Betty Hansford, private citizens
Liz and Kenn Olson, private citizens
E. Ross Yarnell, private citizen
Cathy Haining, private citizen
Mary Andres, private citizen
Jeannette and Marcel Charbonneau, private citizens
Frances and Jim Woolison, private citizens
Mo Tipples, private citizen
Bill McDonald, private citizen
Margaret Richardson, private citizen
Margaret McPherson, private citizen
D. Wayne and Barbara Leslie, private citizens
Patrick Hoger, private citizen
Phil Murray, private citizen
Jim and Carol Nowell, private citizens
Dianne Ungarian, private citizen
Eleanor and Ellert Wattis, private citizens
David and Constance Drybrough, private citizens
Dale Sawchuk, Village of Binscarth
Mary McIntosh, private citizen
K. Helmut Hesse, private citizen
Marlene Boyda, private citizen
Trish Richardson Mason, private citizen
Joan Irving, private citizen
Debra McKibbin, private citizen
Raymond Moreau, private citizen
Mona Yvon-Moreau, private citizen
Frances Krahn, private citizen
Bryan Purdy, private citizen
Deborah and Victor Ritchie, private citizens
T. G. Flook, private citizen
Ron and Dawn Kirbyson, private citizens
Karen and Gordon Paul, private citizens
Bill Mitchell, private citizen
Diana E. Pennington, private citizen
Erik Reinart, private citizen
Deborah Covernton, private citizen
Terry and Dianne Boyce, private citizens
Del Sexsmith, private citizen
Rita and Lloyd Mymko, private citizens
Noreen Reid, private citizen
Ronald and Janet Smith, private citizens
Janet and Mike Sampson, private citizens
Josephine and Henry Dellapenta, private citizens
Margaret Ann Anderson, private citizen
Tim and Mary Louise Ryan, private citizens
Arne Lindell, Rural Municipality of Eriksdale
Karen Klisko, private citizen

Derek Klassen, Rural Municipality of Glenella
Eileen Clarke, Town of Gladstone
David B. McKibbin, private citizen
Keith Middleton, private citizen
Anne Middleton, private citizen
Gail Middleton, private citizen
Gregg Hanson, private citizen
Heather Anderson, private citizen
Jake Goertzen, Town of Manitou
Ray Halas, private citizen
Frank and Theresa Nardella, private citizens

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?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I nominate Erna Braun to be the acting Chair.

Clerk Assistant: Ms. Braun has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Ms. Braun, will you please take the Chair.

Madam Chairperson: Okay, our next item of business is the election of a Vice-Chair. Are there any nominations?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I nominate Mr. Ted Marcelino.

Madam Chairperson: We have Ted Marcelino nominated as Vice-Chair. Are there any other nominations?

Seeing none, Mr. Marcelino is elected as Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider Bill 33, the municipal modernization, municipal amalgamations.

I would like to inform all in attendance of the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment. Except by unanimous consent, a standing committee meeting to consider a bill in the evening must not sit past midnight to hear a presentation unless fewer than 20 presenters are

registered to speak to all bills being considered when the committee meets at 6 p.m. And we have—as of 6 o'clock this evening, there are 83 persons registered to speak, as noted on the 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, as previously announced, that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development would meet again Tuesday, September the 10th, 2013, and if necessary, Wednesday, September 12th—and if necessary, on Wednesday, September 11th, at 6 p.m., to continue consideration of Bill 33.

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I would suggest that the committee sit until midnight and then we can reassess then. If there are people still in the room at that time who haven't presented, the committee may, by unanimous leave, want to continue.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Madam Chair, there's just some concern there. We know that some of the presenters have travelled a long distance, and I'm saying two to four hours plus, and before we adjourn tonight, if we can make sure that those people who have travelled a great deal of distance, that we get to hear them. And I—you know, we'll sit 'til midnight, but then I would just ask that all members consider that before we adjourn tonight, because it is—they've gone the distance, literally, to be here, so we want to make sure we accommodate them.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Ms. Howard: Yes, we have no problem agreeing that if folks have travelled more than two hours to come that we will hear them tonight. And maybe if those folks can just let the staff at the back of the room know who they are, we can make sure that they are heard tonight.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. So what we will do, then, is we will sit 'til midnight, review how many people are remaining and decide to go forward.

Ms. Howard: I think that the intent here is that for folks who have travelled a long distance, and I guess we'll take the kind of more than two hours, if they want to let the staff at the back of the room know who they are, we would try to get them up as early as

we can tonight. We don't want to delay proceedings, so we'll go with the list until we've got that list of people who've travelled more than two hours, but then I would suggest we should proceed through that list first so they can get going back to their homes.

Madam Chairperson: Are we in agreement with that? *[Agreed]*

So anyone who has travelled more than several hours to get here, perhaps you can meet with the Clerk at the back to let them know and then we can adjust our list to make sure that you have the opportunity of coming up a bit earlier. Thank you.

Okay, we do have a number of out-of-town presenters. In what order does the committee wish to hear the presentations?

Ms. Howard: We'll hear from out-of-town presenters first. I suggest we start with the out-of-town presenters as they're listed on the list. When we get the list that's being generated now of people who are more than two hours away, that we then go to that list until it's done and then we go back to the rest of the out-of-town presenters, and then we do everybody else.

Madam Chairperson: Okay, are we in agreement? *[Agreed]*

Before we proceed with presentations, we do have a number of other items and points of information to consider. First of all, if there is anyone else in the audience who would like to make a presentation this evening, please register with staff at the entrance of the room. Also, for the information of all presenters, while written versions of presentations are not required, if you are going to accompany your presentation with written materials, we ask that you provide 20 copies. If you need help with photocopying, our staff can do that as well.

I would like to inform presenters that in accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentation with another 5 minutes allowed for questions from committee members. What I generally do is if you have a minute left, I will remind you that you have a minute left.

Also, in accordance with our rules, if a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. If we complete the list of presenters tonight, we will call the people who registered a second time as a courtesy; however, since two meetings have been

called they will not be removed from the presenter's list. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

A number of written submissions on Bill 33 have been received and distributed for the committee's consideration. A list of the individuals providing these submissions has also been distributed to committee members. To save the Chair having to read these names out, does the committee agree that this list of individuals providing submissions appear in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Pam Gordon, private citizen; Gordon Tomlin, private citizen; Jennifer Engbrecht, private citizen; Walter Tymchuk, private citizen; Glen and Sharon Torgerson, private citizens; Peter Ingram, private citizen; John R. Gow, private citizen; Ron and Sherill Zellis, private citizens; Dick and Elaine Archer, private citizens; Elizabeth Deacon, private citizen; Murray Davies and Doreen Stapleton, Rural Municipality of Harrison; Donna Thain, private citizen; Marjorie Birley, private citizen; Graham and Allison Bloomer, private citizens; Joyce Ramsay, private citizen; Fran Allary, private citizen; Sally Lawler, private citizen; Fred Taylor, Rural Municipality of Lawrence; Brad Coe, Rural Municipality of Cameron; Dennis Forbes, Rural Municipality of Dauphin; Beverley Underhill, private citizen; Bob Conibear, Rural Municipality of Argyle; Ab and Betty Hansford, private citizens; Liz and Kenn Olson, private citizens; E. Ross Yarnell, private citizen; Cathy Haining, private citizen; Mary Andres, private citizen; Jeannette and Marcel Charbonneau, private citizens; Frances and Jim Woolison, private citizens; Mo Tipples, private citizen; Bill McDonald, private citizen; Margaret Richardson, private citizen; Margaret McPherson, private citizen; D. Wayne and Barbara Leslie, private citizens; Patrick Hoger, private citizen; Phil Murray, private citizen; Jim and Carol Nowell, private citizens; Dianne Ungarian, private citizen; Eleanor and Ellert Wattis, private citizen; David and Constance Drybrough, private citizen; Dale Sawchuk, Village of Binscarth; Mary McIntosh, private citizen; K. Helmut Hesse, private citizen; Marlene Boyda, private citizen; Trish Richardson Mason, private citizen; Joan Irving, private citizen; Debra McKibbin, private citizen; Raymond Moreau, private citizen; Mona Yvon-Moreau, private citizen; Frances Krahn, private citizen; Bryan Purdy, private citizen; Deborah and Victor Ritchie, private citizens; Tim Flook, private citizen; Ron and Dawn Kirbyson, private citizens; Karen and Gordon Paul, private citizens; Bill Mitchell, private citizen; Diana E.

Pennington, private citizen; Erik Reinart, private citizen; Deborah Covernton, private citizen; Terry and Dianne Boyce, private citizens; Del Sexsmith, private citizen; Rita and Lloyd Mymko, private citizens; Noreen Reid, private citizen; Ronald and Janet Smith, private citizens; Janet and Mike Sampson, private citizens; Josephine and Henry Dellapenta, private citizens; Margaret Ann Anderson, private citizen; Tim and Mary Louise Ryan, private citizen; Arne Lindell, Rural Municipality of Eriksdale; Karen Klisko, private citizen; Derek Klassen, Rural Municipality of Glenella; Eileen Clarke, Town of Gladstone; David B. McKibbin, private citizen; Keith Middleton, private citizen; Anne Middleton, private citizen; Gail Middleton, private citizen; Gregg Hanson, private citizen; Heather Anderson, private citizen; Jake Goertzen, Town of Manitou.

And does the committee further agree to have these submissions appear in the Hansard's transcript of this meeting? *[Agreed]*

Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise the members of the public regarding the process for speaking in committee. The proceedings of our meetings 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 mic on and off.

And thank you for your patience, and we'll now proceed with public presentations.

I will now call on Doug Dobrowolski, president, Association of Manitoba Municipalities. Do you have materials for us?

Mr. Doug Dobrowolski (Association of Manitoba Municipalities): Yes, I do.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Our staff will distribute them, and you may begin.

Mr. Dobrowolski: Okay. Good evening. The Association of Manitoba Municipalities would like to state our views on Bill 33, The Municipal Modernization Act.

Bill 33 would require any municipality with fewer than 1,000 residents to amalgamate with another municipality with whom they share a boundary. The AMM has enjoyed a long and mutually respectful relationship with Manitoba government–Local Government. This relationship

has been recognized at a national level by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and other provincial associations as one of the best in Canada. However, we are concerned that the provincial government is choosing a path that will destroy this relationship and respect for years to come.

Our members have expressed many concerns since the Province of Manitoba announced its intentions to force amalgamations. Although some members support amalgamation and some do not, it is our position that the decision to amalgamate should rest in the—with the municipal government and its residents. The AMM is not opposed to amalgamation. What we are opposed to is forcing our members to choose a path that may not be right for their community.

*(18:10)

Beyond the forced aspect of this bill, our members have numerous other concerns. First, the proposed timeline of January 1st, 2015, is unreasonable. We believe successful amalgamations occur at a pace that is comfortable for all parties, including the citizens of the affected municipalities. Forcing amalgamation is undemocratic and forcing them within a tight time period causes additional unnecessary stress on everyone involved. The bill does allow the minister to extend the timeline for amalgamation to a date no later than January 1st, 2019, as long as the amalgamation plan has been submitted by the deadline specified. However, we believe there is little potential for flexibility in this bill; it is completely at the discretion of the minister.

Furthermore, we believe that the use of 1,000-citizen threshold to determine who must amalgamate is not only an artificial number, but an inaccurate one. We are aware of the many municipalities currently under this population that function at a very high level. We're also very concerned with the proposed elimination of the public input through the Municipal Board. Although the bill states that amalgamating municipalities must provide a reasonable opportunity for members of the public to comment, there is no requirement to involve the Municipal Board. The bill does not mention what would happen if members of the public are opposed to amalgamation.

Finally, although Bill 33 includes provisions to initially keep all policing arrangements the same despite any amalgamations, the AMM has concerns about how it will work in practice. Where one

amalgamating municipality has its own police force or is policed by the RCMP, a new arrangement will have to be made within three years. If a new arrangement is not made after the three years to have one police service for the amalgamated municipality, the minister will enter into an agreement with the RCMP to provide policing for that municipality.

Overall, the legislation is very proscriptive to municipalities, including those over populations of 1,000. Because legislation requires neighbouring municipalities to work co-operatively with those under a thousand, many more municipalities might, in fact, be infected regardless of their population. There is also the fact that, despite numerous discussions with Minister Lemieux and his staff around this issue, to date the Province has been neither unable to demonstrate any definitive evidence that money will be saved after amalgamation, nor that the quality of life of the citizens will increase. In fact, there is evidence that costs will go up. A study by the C.D. Howe Institute suggests that small municipalities contract for services with their neighbours, private suppliers or other providers when it is cost efficient to do so and provide services themselves when it is less costly. The same study goes on to state that amalgamation tends to eliminate the very characteristics of local government that are critical to successful, low-cost operations.

Municipal leaders are—already receive low remuneration as compared to their federal and provincial counterparts. They contribute countless hours to serve their communities because they are part of the community. Many of them are not interested in becoming elected officials who will end up costing their citizens more money while covering larger areas. As stated earlier, the AMM is not opposed to amalgamation. We have seen cases where discussion has begun and municipalities are moving forward on this initiative. However, we have also seen situations emerging where the threat of forced amalgamation is tearing communities apart, who have built their partnerships over the last few decades. Some municipalities have consulted with their citizens, who also oppose amalgamation.

In the interest of preserving our good relationship with the government and in ensuring that our members retain their ability to make decisions based on the needs of the citizens who elected them, we have proposed the following compromises. First, we believe that the Province should take the time to assess the viability and sustainability of communities

at the current funding levels. The AMM would be pleased to have a role in this assessment, perhaps by enhancing the Tools for Change document jointly developed by the AMM and Local Government.

Second, we ask that the Province eliminate the thousand-threshold requirement, as this is an artificial number that does not reflect the reality of municipalities in Manitoba. Third, we ask that the Province provide all the support necessary for those who are ready to amalgamate before the next municipal election. We know there are discussions taking place with a number of municipalities and are working toward this goal. Monitoring the progress of these early mergers, highlighting their successes and allowing municipalities to lead by example will lighten the load on everyone, while at the same time encouraging those that may be hesitant.

Finally, we recommend that the Province work with those Manitoba municipalities that are struggling to be sustainable on acceptable timelines that will result in better service to their communities. Again, the AMM would like to be a willing participant in a joint committee with the Province to achieve this.

The Association of Bilingual Municipalities recognizes that Bill 33 has clauses and provisions included in it which are intended to address linguistic, cultural and other specific issues specific to Manitoba's bilingual municipalities facing amalgamation. These francophone communities are concerned that their long-standing francophone services, such as front-line services, translation services and economic development services, will be jeopardized by an amalgamation with a larger non-francophone municipality. The challenge will be for them to incorporate adequate protection for these acquired services on a permanent basis regardless of the potentially diluted power of the decision that they are faced with because of amalgamation. The francophone municipalities facing amalgamation will be looking at innovative options available to them in order to ensure that their bilingual status is maintained.

In summary, we respectfully request your consideration of our presentation and the will of our membership. We will sincerely hope that it's not too late to 'compro'—make a compromise regarding this issue because, at the end of the day, Bill 33 is much more than about finding a way to become more efficient or save money. It's about considering the fabric of communities that are homes and birthplaces

of many thousands of Manitobans. It is about listening to the people who have built their livelihoods, raised their families and served their communities with honour and integrity over years, decades, in some cases, centuries. It is about respecting and recognizing the abilities and value of another elected order of government, not dictating to it.

Unfortunately, Bill 33 has done none of those things. What it has done is increase the stress levels of hard-working municipal councils. It has caused anxiety among citizens who have devoted their lives to creating safe, healthy and vibrant communities. And what it still threatens to do is damage, possibly beyond repair, the relationship between two orders of government, all with the stroke of a pen. Rather than taking a thoughtful and collaborative approach, the government is pushing this through without consideration of the people whom it'll affect the most. Why? And, more importantly, why now? Why risk something so monumental that it will change the landscape of our province forever? We ask the question repeatedly and receive no answer, yet the government expects us to believe that Bill 33 was created to bring us together. In reality, it's tearing us apart.

We ask for your reconsideration of Bill 33. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

We now have time for questions.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Well, not necessarily a question, I just want to say thanks to you, Doug. We've had a long working relationship. I want to take the opportunity to thank you for coming out tonight and presenting on behalf of your membership. And also, in fact, I'd like to thank all people who are here tonight and wanting to make some comments to us and give us some suggestions and ideas with regard to the legislation, and we appreciate that very, very much.

And as you have pointed out—and not pointed out recently, at least not in your presentation, but we are working on many, many things together jointly in partnership, the Building Canada Fund—the new Building Canada Fund, which currently exists, but the new one that's going to be coming as of April 1st, 2014, working with the federal government and all municipalities being one-third

partners with the Province and the feds. And also the provincial gas tax, which flows through the province, we worked very, very closely on, and also trying to work with regard to small communities and community input with regard to the Building Canada Fund. So there's a lot of things that we're working on in a positive way, and this particular legislation, we feel, is to 'modernize' municipalities, to create conditions for stronger municipalities—we've always believed that. But tonight is about listening to the people and having people have their say, and so I'm pleased to be here to do that and I know my colleagues are as well, from all parties, to hear what people have to say and the kind of suggestions they may have for me, as the minister, but also for our government.

So, with that, Doug, I just want to say thank you to AMM for all your hard work and for being a strong advocate on behalf of your members. I sincerely mean that. Thank you—thank you very much.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Doug, for your presentation and for the consultations that we've had over the past year since last November when this was first announced.

And the question I have for you is, you outlined four alternatives in here or four things that you would like the Local Government to undertake to help fix up this bill. I'm assuming—can I assume that you have presented it to Local Government? And what was their response to that?

*(18:20)

Mr. Dobrowolski: Yes, we have presented this right, actually, from the beginning. When we were told last November that this was going to be in the Throne Speech, we approached Local Government and said that we want to work with them to try and work through this process, and we were turned down.

Mr. Pedersen: Turned down? [*interjection*]

Madam Chairperson: Oh, Mr.—sorry, Mr. Dobrowolski.

Mr. Dobrowolski: We had offered suggestions on wanting to work with the government with those municipalities that wanted—that were ready to go, that wanted to do this right away and that were two willing, or three willing partners ready to go, and to make sure that this process is fair for both the

municipalities and the government thought they had a better way of doing it.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Thank you, Doug, for your words of wisdom. You've had a tremendous amount of experience at the municipal level and when you speak, it comes with a lot of experience and a lot of weight.

You mentioned here that one of the things that the province needs to do is to provide all the support necessary to those who are ready to amalgamate. I would've thought that that would be happening. Is it not?

Mr. Dobrowolski: Well, no, there's been a first round of field consultants, as the Province calls them, to go out and to talk to municipalities to try and get them to talk. These are just introductory meetings from what we understand. The feedback that we've got from some of our members that they were not helpful at all. We actually need people to go out and answer some of the financial and tough questions that municipalities are asking on how they—if they wish to go farther on what to do.

So we are—have been asking all along for what resources the Province has dedicated to this. We finally got an answer, that they've spent about \$40,000 so far. We've been asking on how many field consultants they've had; we never got an answer yet to this date. We never—we've—and we haven't got—we've been asking the qualifications of these field consultants, and we haven't got that as of day.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Thanks, Doug, really good presentation and I agree with pretty well everything you say in it. But you do speculate a little bit in there about policing costs. And there's been no indication to you at all—usually governments do something for a reason but—maybe going to happen down the road. But what's the gain for the Province in this? Is it that they will have to deal with less people from the municipalities? Maybe that's a bonus to them. Or maybe there's another shoe going to drop on policing costs or some other downloading?

Mr. Dobrowolski: Well, we got those questions, Mr. Briese, and today we—up 'til today we really haven't got an answer. And our thinking is is the 'enity' have to be that big because we're afraid that there might be downloads down in the future.

So we have a very—we're very concerned about where this amalgamation is going and how it's actually going to affect the people that elect us as elected people there and the effect on the residents,

because at the end of the day—as we all heard this term—there's only one taxpayer. Well, they're paying the bill.

So—and they're in a query of what's going on as well because we have not got answers, a lot of answers from Local Government that we, as the elected people, can tell our residents when we have a public hearing. So we're very concerned and I think that's why a lot of councils haven't got their public engaged to this point because they don't know what to tell them and what's the right path to go. So, but some have been very fruitful meetings with their residents and they've—the residents have expressed one way or the other the strong, heartfelt which way to go.

But we're very concerned of what might happen down the road, obviously, as far as the large entity. Service delivery is a big one. Larger doesn't necessarily mean better. Costs are going to go up. I still haven't been shown where it's going to save us money.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Our time for questions has expired.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Chairperson: Point of order.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Madam Chair, I ask leave of the committee to—this is the president of AMM. The minister's made it very clear that we're here to listen—this is the president of the Manitoba municipalities. I think it's important that all questions be answered before this presentation end.

I ask leave of the committee that we answer all questions.

Ms. Howard: Thank you. On the same point of order, I appreciate the presentation. I know the presenter is offering good advice here and is well informed, but given that we've over 80 presenters, I think the thing that's most fair to everybody is if we stick to our time frame for every presentation. He's left us a good written presentation. I know he's been very active on this file; he's met with many members on this issue.

So with respect, and no disrespect intended, I would suggest the fairest way to conduct this meeting is to allow for every presenter to have the 10 minutes for presentation and five minutes for questions.

Madam Chairperson: There is no point of order. It's just difference of opinion, and I do not see leave for extending the question period.

* * *

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

I'd now like to call on Rick Pauls, mayor, the Amalgamated Municipalities of Killarney-Turtle Mountain. Do you have some materials to distribute?

Mr. Rick Pauls (Amalgamated Municipalities of Killarney-Turtle Mountain): I do not.

Madam Chairperson: Then, please, begin.

Mr. Pauls: Thank you very much. Thank you for this opportunity. When Bill 33 was first announced as an amalgamated municipality, we kind of went, whew, doesn't apply to us. We went through the process, and the process has been very, very, very good for us. Would we do it again? Absolutely. We went through it and the gains that we have now as an amalgamated municipality has made us stronger. But there's a few flaws that I think need to be changed with this bill, that being said.

We started a conversation about 10 years before we even went through the amalgamation process. We had joint council meetings. We worked very closely. We started building things together, sharing services and everything like that. By the time we had gotten to the point where the decision was made to amalgamate, it was another six years for that process to go through. The last two years were extremely, extremely time consuming. There was meeting upon meeting. How are we going to do this? We had two different unions that we had to amalgamate. Whose staff are we going to use? Are we going to lay off? Are we going to hire speciality people in? How are we going to actually make this happen?

I am a proponent of amalgamation. I think that it makes sense if you give it time. I don't believe in rushing into anything. If you rush into anything, inevitably you're going to look back at it and go, oh, I wish we would have thought of this. If you build a house, you don't decide that I'm going to build a house next month. I'm going to scribble it on a serviette. This is the house that I'm going to build. You give thought to it. You give thought to how is the electrical going to work? Where am I going to put the plug-ins? How am I going to paint it? Am I going to put linoleum in, hardwood in, am I going to put carpet in?

These are all things that on a municipal level, these things take an awful lot of time and I would urge this committee to recommend that this bill get extended. I think that the 2019 timeline is achievable, absolutely. And it'll give people time to go into the next election knowing that it is their mandate to work on these amalgamations, and I think at the end of the day you're going to end up with some stronger municipalities out there. And if that is the goal of this bill, I think that that's what needs to happen. We need to give them time to build the relationships to make it stronger. It's amazing what you can do in strong relationships, working together. And if we give that time I know that people will do it, especially with that election in between. It'll give the people who are running in that election to make sure that they see the long-term picture for it.

The second thing that I'd like to mention is this notion about the thousand people. A thousand people don't make you feasible, doesn't make you unfeasible. That's like saying I go to a church that has 1,100 people, we're a good church, and the people who go to anything under a thousand people, it's a bad church. That weighs nothing into it.

We govern based on representation of all people. It doesn't matter how many people. If 20 people elect you, your representing 20 people. If 10,000 people elect you, you're representing the 10,000. But what makes you feasible at the end of the day in municipal government is your tax base, your assessment. We have smaller municipalities out there right now with small communities that could teach the City of Winnipeg, the Province, and, indeed, the country of Canada, how to run their finances. This is a fact. We have municipalities out there that have surpluses that per capita would make any other government jealous. So, to the notion on the thousand people here, it just doesn't wash.

I believe that there should be an aspect put in of assessment, because if we're looking to be viable and stronger, we tax base on that. So if we're taxing based on that, that's what would make us more viable. We could take strengths from one and we can combine them with weaknesses of other, and together we'll put the entire place up and I think that that should be the goal. And I would urge those two changes to this bill: No. 1, please change the timeline. Give the people the time to go in with a mandate with four years to work on the amalgamations and they will come out stronger. And the second thing is is throw out that thousand people. A thousand people makes no sense whatsoever. But,

if you do it based on assessment and on the strength and the financial strength of it, because at the end of the day these municipalities—what we're left with—have to be financially viable because, like, what was said earlier here, we all deal with the same taxpayers. So let's do it based on financial viability, not population count.

Thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Pauls. Questions?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes. Thank you very much, Rick, for your presentation. Much appreciated, and I know I've just—actually just reviewing a quote that is attributed to you about how important the infrastructure needs were and to grow your community and the new development that has happened. It would not have happened had the rural and urban communities not been working as one. Amalgamation is important.

* (18:30)

The Rural Development Institute of Brandon did a study that said that a tax base of \$130-million tax base and/or a 3,000 population would be one that would carry a municipality and carry it in a way that would be viable and sustainable well into the future. Just a question on what your thoughts are on that report.

Mr. Pauls: I would absolutely agree on the \$130 million. Again, when you get to the population base of approximately 3,000 people, your assessment would be large enough that you'd probably achieve that \$130 million anyway. I believe that the \$130 million should be the number that we should be looking at. And, absolutely, that is what makes you viable. It doesn't make sense if you have the cash to build an arena that's going to service 300 people and spend \$6 million doing it, if you don't have that asset behind you.

So I really believe that the \$130 million, that's a terrific benchmark, but that should be integrated into this bill. And get rid of the population base; base it on assessment.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you. I think that that concept of basing—using the assessment as a critical base is an important one that you're putting forward. You've commented on \$130 million. Is \$130 million right? Should it be lower or higher?

Mr. Pauls: I believe that our last assessment came at \$132 million, so I think we'd be fine. But I can't quantify that. People a lot smarter than we—we would

be able to do that. But I don't think you can pose it just on a blank number. I think there should be a range, and I think that they should be able to prove to you financially—we integrated public sector accounting here. You guys have the books. We run our municipalities now like businesses. You see profit and loss statements, you see depreciation and everything like that. The tools are there to tell whether or not the places are feasible or not—use them. They were instituted by this government; let's use those tools.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Thank you very much, Rick. I appreciate you taking the time to come to Winnipeg tonight to make your presentation.

Certainly, I see a lot of heads nodding when you talked about fiscal responsibility. For municipalities that have been through the amalgamation process—I know it was a long, drawn-out process—can you kind of relate to me some of the issues that ratepayers had when you first got into those discussions about, you know, the whole taxation and possible changes in taxation? And I know that was quite a concern from the locals. Can you comment on that for us?

Mr. Pauls: Absolutely. The main concern when we amalgamated, from the ratepayers, was, No. 1, loss of identity, and No. 2 was based on population because we had a town and a municipality, and if it just went on number of votes, the town was bigger, the town's going to control everything and we're not going to get the services out in the country that we did. We basically went around and we did a ward system where we have two wards. We still have two mill rates in place. And we just basically share common services. These common services could be shared without having to amalgamate; however, it just streamlined our process.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you, Mr. Pauls, for your presentation.

We have received our list of people who've driven more than two hours to get here, and I'd like to call on Debbie McMechan, councillor, Rural Municipality of Edward.

Do you have some handouts to distribute?

Ms. Debbie McMechan (Rural Municipality of Edward): I do.

Madam Chairperson: Our staff will assist you, and you can begin at any time.

Ms. McMechan: Good evening. My name is Debbie McMechan. I'm a councillor in the RM of Edward, a municipality in the very southwest corner of the province. On behalf of Reeve Ralph Wang and my fellow councillors, I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to the standing committee regarding Bill 33.

So much has been said and written, first following the November 2012 Throne Speech announcing the Province would force amalgamations of municipalities, to now what feels like this 11th hour. The November AMM annual conference and the spring Municipal Officials Seminar were permeated with an air of disbelief, bewilderment that our provincial government would jeopardize the long-standing relationship between rural municipalities, the AMM, and Local Government, one that has served our province so well.

Municipalities, the AMM and individual citizens have responded with logical, rational arguments drawn from the vast body of notable research that concludes that forced amalgamations are fraught with long-term negative factors that offset any benefit that can be gleaned from the process.

At the spring mayors and reeves meeting in Waskada, while prefacing our question to Mr. Lemieux, we advised the minister that we held a community meeting to inform our ratepayers about forced amalgamations. Upon hearing that our ratepayers strenuously objected to the proposed bill, Mr. Lemieux expressed an interest in their reasons. Although time did not permit us to answer then, please accept this submission from the RM of Edward as our answer to Mr. Lemieux's question.

This past February 26th, our council held a ratepayers meeting in our community hall to inform citizens about fundamental changes being forced on municipalities under a thousand people. Our council felt that we really could not proceed with discussions about amalgamation until we had an understanding of how our ratepayers felt. Let me just say that it isn't always easy to get people in rural Manitoba to put back on their snow boots after a warm supper and drive 'aco'—across frozen country roads to discuss politics in the dead of winter. But we had a full house.

Our council presented the information as a timeline without bias and opened the floor to our ratepayers. What followed was a lively discussion about our community now and in the future. From the perspective of council, it was very interesting

listening to our friends and neighbours discuss our community, and the evening culminated in an impromptu moment when, in the purest form of grassroots politics, a nearly unanimous motion sprang forth from the audience advising our council to do everything we could in opposition to this forced provincial initiative.

So why does our community and our council feel so strongly about forced amalgamations? What makes a group of ratepayers come together to compose such a motion on a frigid February evening? In a word: survival. Community survival. Our ratepayers and our council believe a forced amalgamation threatens the future of our community. Let me explain.

The combined effects of globalization and structural adjustments in Canadian agriculture have cut a wide swath through most western Canadian communities, and our RM was no exception. In the wake of the depopulation wave of the 1980s, successive municipal councils, individuals and groups of citizens in the RM of Edward have expended heroic efforts to maintain our community viability. Wise and strategic planning by successive co-op boards have kept a full-service grocery store, an agro centre and a thriving fuel business servicing our community. When our community restaurant shut down and no entrepreneur stepped forward to buy the business, which required the investment of a new building, a committee materialized and local farmers donated a thousand dollars each to build and furnish a new restaurant. Management was secured by wide-scaled advertisement, and that fixture was back and thriving in our community. We have maintained a K-to-12 school in our community of interest and recently welcomed the addition of an early learning centre to that building. The RM was delighted to help that organization with interim funding to get started.

The last few years have been especially encouraging. Young people, some originally from the area, and others drawn for a host of reasons, have begun to move to our community with their families. Retirees are deciding to make the RM of Edward their home. These newcomers have purchased existing homes, and there has been an encouraging number of new homes built. Our RM was placed in the wonderful position of having to zone and build and new street in town. We have a variety of new businesses springing up in the community, and enrolment numbers at the school have finally begun to turn around. In 2012, the

municipality built a wonderful new state-of-the-art fire hall, and volunteerism is thriving everywhere. Growth in the RM of Edward, measuring proportioned assessment, is up over 50 per cent from the years 2010 to '13.

Life in the RM of Edward is very good. Optimism is everywhere. Well, optimism was everywhere. Just as we were beginning to really experience a moment of growth, our provincial government pronounced us dysfunctional and we were advised to find partners and pick a name that fit comfortably inside an envelope window. The people of our community know exactly what that means. We will be a fringe area with a centralized local government. Existing on the fringe of a new municipality will be a microcosm of the experience of existing on the fringe of the province. Where we can now make a long-term plan and apply our resources to maintaining and improving our existing infrastructure, we understand perfectly well that an infrastructure-needy central town, one that is not our community of interest, will borrow on our healthy tax assessment to address a growing plethora of problems.

The RM of Edward council and its ratepayers are unconvinced by the litany of rhetoric that has touted the benefits of amalgamation. Those original and now completely discounted reasons, such as unclaimed federal tax transfers and overtaxed auditors—and now commissioned academic arguments—smack of insincerity and undue haste. The documents *Identifying and Explaining Self-Contained Labour Areas in Rural Manitoba* and *Indicators and Criteria for Strong Rural Municipalities in Manitoba*, commissioned by Local Government from the Rural Development Institute at Brandon University, both dated April 25th, 2013, are very troubling.

*(18:40)

Using the benchmark of an ideal population of 3,000, these studies would have municipalities span distances of over 1,200 square miles, where taxation with marginal representation will be the order of the day. Although we have an assessment tool custom-made for this province, the AMM's municipal healthy checklist, the Rural Development Institute chose instead to use a document called *Building Stronger Local Governments and Regions*, a report commissioned by the government of New Brunswick and flatly rejected by the voters of that province. This report has been gathering dust on the

shelves in the Maritimes only to be resurrected this year in Manitoba, presumably because we are so geographically similar, and employed as an academic tool justifying this otherwise unpalatable forced amalgamation. The Rural Development Institute seems to believe that the next step in evolutionary development of municipal governments must be amalgamation, that the structure of our small, rural councils have outgrown their usefulness, that we've become archaic.

Well, let me just say this about our small municipality: we balance our budget; we are progressive. In the span of the last three years and at the end of 2013, by forging partnerships with industry, our council will have built one RTAC bridge and refurbished another. We will have clay-capped 10 miles of gravel road and developed an industrial deep well to protect shallow and water- and surface water sources. We have done it without borrowing a dime and while filing our PSAP audits on time. We have also accomplished it while suffering the epic flood of 2011 and while experiencing 64 disaster sites from this year's flooding. If we, in the RM of Edward, shudder to conceive of the consequences of an ideological and ill-informed approach to policy making on this scale, it is because we have worked too hard and we love our community too much to see it pencilled out because of an arbitrary number. These past months have amounted to tough times for small municipalities. It has come down to difficult choices: comply with the provincial government and see our community die on the vine, or pick a hill to die on and see how long we can hold out. Is there another way?

Minister Lemieux has spoken about amendments to Bill 33 that give us hope, and we ask you to please consider these recommendations when writing the amendments to Bill 33. An inclusion of exemptions for municipalities with a healthy tax assessment or for RMs that are experiencing growth, based on a formula the AMM considers fair in evaluating viability. Discard arbitrary numbers such as 1,000 or 3,000. They're meaningless in this discussion of a healthy rural Manitoba. Engage the knowledge and expertise of the AMM and make use of the municipal healthy checklist when determining the future of rural Manitoba. And finally, slow down the process so municipalities can clearly assess their options of possible partners.

We understand that Local Government wants the province to grow. We understand that Bill 33 was

created with good intentions, but a blanket approach based solely on population is not the answer for rural Manitoba.

Madam Chairperson: Excuse me, you have one minute.

Ms. McMechan: Thank you.

We stand by our ratepayers' resolution from that bitterly cold February night, and on behalf of the RM of Edward council and the ratepayers of our municipality, we hereby register our vehement opposition to Bill 33.

Mr. Lemieux: I just want to thank you for taking the time for coming out tonight and expressing your views. It's very, very important. You've travelled a long way and I hope we've tried to accommodate those people. I apologize, I have a cold and sore throat, but I just want to say thank you so much for coming. You came a long way to express your views and that's what committee hearings are all about, to hear from Manitobans, so I thank you for that, very much.

Mr. Gerrard: Thanks very much. And clearly you've been doing something right because your assessment has been growing a lot recently.

Following up the discussion of the assessment, I mean, we've heard numbers of \$130 million. I think what you would suggest that whether a municipality is growing or not is also to be taken into account. But I'd just like you to comment, what's your assessment base currently, and how would things fit?

Ms. McMechan: Oh, thanks, sorry. Based on our numbers that are just coming in for the 2013, I believe it's \$85 million. Our CAO is here, so she can correct me if I'm wrong. But I don't really think \$130 million is a magic jump-off spot, with all due respect to Mayor Pauls. I think that it works for them, but our population is much smaller. So I would—I think that the councils that I've talked to and the ratepayers in our municipality would be very confident that if a number was to be achieved it be done with the—using the resources of the AMM and having their input on deciding what is a healthy number for assessment. I think that would be the best course of action.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen, my apologies, you were first.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Madam Chair, it's not a problem.

Thank you, Debbie, for your presentation, and if you're going to pick a hill, as you said, I think you picked the right one on this because this is all about community and it's about growth in your community. There is growth there. It's to—just to look back at the depopulation and base that as making a judgment call, I think, is the wrong call because it's not looking forward. And your communities are certainly growing and you are closest to the taxpayer and you know what's good for your community. So thank you for coming in. Thank you for giving a presentation and a safe drive home.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much. I see no further questions. Thank you for your presentation.

Two additional written submissions on Bill 33 from the following persons have just been received and copies have been distributed to committee members, Ray Halas, Frank and Theresa Nardella. Does the committee agree to have these documents appear in the Hansard transcript of this meeting. *[Agreed]*

I will now call on Olive McKean, reeve, Rural Municipality of Miniota.

Do you have some materials to distribute?

Ms. Olive McKean (Rural Municipality of Miniota): Yes, I do.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you and you may begin.

Ms. McKean: Good evening. My name is Olive McKean, I'm the reeve of the RM of Miniota. On behalf of the rural municipality of Miniota, I am pleased to be able to voice our concerns with regards to Bill 33. We are a very viable municipality presently undergoing remarkable growth. We have a pipeline crossing our municipality which generates revenue and recently have an extensive amount of oil industry activity and revenue.

Along with this comes an influx of employment creating a vast increase in population. Due to high demand for homes, we are currently in the process of lot development within Miniota. Our population is growing at a very rapid rate and we anticipate this will continue for many years with this boom in the oil industry in our immediate area. Many municipalities, including ours, that is within the oil and mining area are just starting to see population moving in. In a few short years, these municipalities could be well over the 1,000 population mark. So

why force amalgamation on a growing municipality just because their numbers show below 1,000?

We understand that the census numbers are based upon an average of 50 per cent of public response. How can government trust these numbers are accurate and use this factor only to force amalgamation on municipality?

We also have a First Nations reservation located on the edge of our boundaries. These residents support our municipality in every way, excluding taxes. They are people of our communities, yet their numbers are not included. Why not? The Decker Hutterite Colony is within our municipality and contributes to our taxes, businesses and communities. Population should not be used as the only determining factor whether municipalities should amalgamate.

Financial position of municipality and assessment base should be considered. Our municipality's assessment is over 83 million taxable assessment contributing to low mill rates with the projection for 2014 at 92 million. We have recently completed an office expansion and renovations with the price tag of \$700,000. That includes offices for the RM office, the Upper Assiniboine River Conservation District, Midwest Planning District and the Miniota Community Development Corp. and the Miniota Fitness Centre. Do you expect us just to pack up, join with another municipality and close our doors? It would be very difficult to explain to taxpayers why we built an office we no longer can use, which would be the case if we are forced to amalgamate.

We have been encouraged to have discussions with community of interest. If you understand the rural areas in any way, you would know that there is not a specific community of interest. A municipality is widespread and ratepayers have interests in many different surrounding communities. In our case, we have four surrounding communities we share interests with in all directions. To force us to choose a community of interest would be like telling our ratepayers that the RM of Miniota does not exist anymore so let's just pick somewhere else to call home. There is no benefit to causing this massive disturbance to all of rural Manitoba.

* (18:50)

The towns and villages that are surrounded by a common municipality, of course they should be one and the same, and they know it and they are doing it.

In the past, the largest community being Miniota, has already become community of interest to several small towns who are within our municipality: we have Beulah, Crandall, Isabella and Arrow River. These communities still hold their name; another amalgamation will only lessen their ability to stay alive. Is this what you are wanting our province to become?

We in the rural area already know how to share resources. We have done so in many cases—hospitals, vets, libraries, recreation, planning districts, conservation districts, schools, only to name a few—and are much more capable of making it work than urban areas are. We need to keep our voice local, keep the jobs local and keep our small, rural towns alive; the only way we can do that is to keep our municipalities the way they are now. If amalgamation would be in our best interest, or our neighbouring municipality's best interest, we would do it, without being forced.

It seems almost worthless to be making this presentation, as there has been previous meetings with Mr. Lemieux wanting to hear our concerns and that he would listen, only to be stabbed in the back by this government who labelled municipalities as dysfunctional and insolent children. We were asked for our input, which we gave, and no one listened. We are not children here. We would know if there was a need for amalgamation and we would take the necessary action without being forced, just as some have already done.

Amalgamation is a process where people are—that are affected should be able to voice their opinion. This legislation is removing the decision from the people who will—who this will affect the most. The legislation suggests community consultation is required; what are local councils to do if the majority of the ratepayers are against amalgamation?

Local councils serve local ratepayers. Amalgamation could be considered the removal of a community and no one wants to lose their community. In the small, rural community, the municipal office is considered a main artery; to remove it, it would hold a huge impact to the survival of a community.

I cannot believe that we have such people in power that would want to be responsible for forcing such actions that may result in undoing of a small community. Our government always promotes that they work close with municipal government; well,

this time is certainly not one of those times. It is very disappointing to know that the people who have been elected by the people choose to run a government the way they are. This government is very much out of touch with the local municipalities.

We urge you to withdraw this piece of 'legistray'—legislation and begin consultations with at-risk municipalities in a constructive, positive manner.

I would also like to express our disappointment that this opportunity to speak is taking place during peak harvest season—just a thought—but it appears that you were hoping everyone in the rural areas would be engaged in harvest and unable to make their presentations. It is not too difficult to see that you really do not want us here to say what we have to say.

This is your chance to listen and reconsider your very aggressive, unnecessary action.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, I just want to take the opportunity to thank you again for your comments, and I know you were at your particular community when we held the—one of the regional meetings there. And I thank you very much for taking the time, you've travelled a long way to be here and drive safely, please. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: And thanks, Reeve McKean, for your presentation tonight. I know you came a long ways to be here. And I just wondered if you would have speculated at all with your council about why—what's behind the Province making this move, the forced amalgamations? Do you see a step two or another step coming here at some point, in some way, shape or form?

Ms. McKean: No, we don't really understand why this is taking place at all. People have been asking for questions on what's the purpose of it and what are we going to gain and we haven't really gotten any responses. So, from a council level, we're really very uncertain as to why this is even happening.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Olive, for coming. I was at that meeting in Miniota and I know there was a lot of opinions expressed there, and people expressed them very eloquently and tonight again you've done that. And I just encourage you to keep it up; keep telling this

government what you're telling them. Perhaps somewhere down the line they will listen to you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you. And obviously the municipality's doing well and is growing, so that's great.

One of the suggested reasons for the amalgamation was that so communities would be able to participate in one-third, one-third, one-third funding—municipal, provincial, federal. And one of the questions is what is the tax base you need to do that.

I think you did, for example, a new sewage lagoon not very long ago. I can't remember what that cost and how it financed it, but would you comment on the size of assessment tax base you need to be a viable municipality?

Ms. McKean: Actually, I'm not very good with those kind of numbers. I'm just at the—off a whim—but we did have a new sewage lagoon done just before I stepped into council. But, as with growth and everything, we are in the need of a new one. So we have to work towards that right now, and doing this is making things very difficult to be participating in other functions right now. But a tax base, I don't know, sorry.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call on Larry Oakden, mayor, Town of Hamiota.

Do you have some materials to distribute?

Mr. Larry Oakden (Town of Hamiota): I do.

Madam Chairperson: Our staff will hand those out. And you may start at—if you're ready.

Mr. Oakden: Thank you, Madam Chair. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm Larry Oakden, the mayor of the Town of Hamiota.

The Town of Hamiota was incorporated in 1907 and since then has successfully shared administration of the corporation of the—with the Rural Municipality of Hamiota. Currently the town has a population of 868. The Town of Hamiota would like to register their opposition to Bill 33, The Municipal Modernization Act.

Under the right circumstances, amalgamation can be a very good thing for municipalities in Manitoba, and there has been a process in place that

have—that some have used to successfully amalgamate and move forward. The key to the success of previous amalgamations was due largely to the principles currently legislated for other procedures, like presentation of annual financial plans, land use and land-zoning issues, capital borrowing, public consultation, which was legislated by the Province of Manitoba to create more accountability by a local government to the public.

The Province of Manitoba—and let's be very clear—being all governments formed in this province in the last 30 years have consistently passed legislation that requires local government to consult with the public where it politically suits them, not to mention Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

How many times have we seen premiers and Cabinet ministers show up at sod-turnings and ribbon cuttings with big cheques for the establishment of an industry that will create jobs that they are there to take credit for? Yet, behind the scenes, the local government and community has had to battle it out over the land use and environmental issues surrounding the said industry, which, in many cases, divides communities for many years to follow. In this case, it is still acceptable for the Province to parachute in their appointed independent third party, the Municipal Board, to ensure the photo ops at the ribbon cutting occur?

The Town of Hamiota would like to reiterate that it is not opposed to amalgamation, but Bill 33 is not the solution. Enclosed you will find a certified copy of resolution No. 4, passed by the council of the Town of Hamiota at their regular meeting on March 20th, 2013. Also enclosed is a response from the provincial government. The resolution addresses two concerns: limited time frame for implementation and disregard for the previously legislated and acceptable practice of public input.

There have been numerous successful amalgamations, as we have previously stated, but there was only one dealt—or there was only one dealt with in the—any given election year. The resources of the many government agencies required to assist with a smooth amalgamation were dedicated to the one amalgamation. Bill 33 identifies the need to involve at least 92 municipalities affected, which can include as many as 46 amalgamations. Did the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) confide in his staff about the resources available in the department to do their part to see

46 amalgamations concluded by the 2014 municipal elections?

* (19:00)

It's ironic that in the last week the media has made the issue of the ability of certain provincial staff to speak openly about issues without reprisal. I think we can all agree that the provincial government, regardless of who they are, encourages all staff to speak openly about anything that supports the provincial agenda. We're all naive to think any leader, public or private, would encourage their staff to go forward and openly criticize them. Politicians might campaign on it, and the private sector spends billions on public relations. But humans are creatures of habit, and when put in a position of power they will exercise whatever it takes to minimize accountability. That is exactly what we are dealing with today.

Back to the concern over time frames. The Town of Hamiota did not just arbitrarily pick the 2018 municipal elections as a benchmark to achieve the goals of Bill 33. The provincial government has not looked at the resources required to make this happen within its own departments, and despite the fact Bill 33 streamlines process, it does not begin to address the workloads involved. The Town of Hamiota sent a resolution to the Minister of Local Government's (Mr. Lemieux) office on March 25th, 2013, and a response was tendered on June 27th, 2013. Now, the minister will raise his hands one more time, tell us how successful Bill 33 has been and how wonderful it has been to have neighbours talking, have his department approve 42 amalgamation plans in time for election bylaws to be in place by April 2014 and, magically, all assessment on tax rolls for the 92 municipalities for 2015 budgets, for starters. Keep in mind municipalities have been told that there are no resources available in the provincial stable to deal with current land use and zoning issues. So one can easily surmise, where will this end up? Does anyone understand the impact of the timeframes and, if so, have they been allowed to speak on them publicly? The Town of Hamiota would surely like to have a debate with them.

Second and most important concern the Town of Hamiota has over Bill 33 is the exclusion of the public input. Now, the Province will tell you that effective municipalities must hold public meetings in order to successfully file their amalgamation plan, but nowhere does it say amalgamation will be

dropped if the majority of the ratepayers are not in favour of it.

We all had the privilege at the past AMM convention in Winnipeg to listen to the Premier (Mr. Selinger) point to the success story that was taking place in the Town and Rural Municipality, of Lac du Bonnet with their amalgamation process. Does anyone know where that is at? Why? It has not been a part of the Premier's speaking notes lately.

The Municipal Act requires the public to vote on who will be their elected officials. It also sets out a number of rules and accountabilities that these officials must abide by to protect the interests of the corporation. Now, these same members of the public have been told that until now they had a say on how their municipality operated, but someone does not respect their decisions so, therefore, they will be denied the right of public input for the sake of a provincial agenda. This may be an easier pill to swallow, were there a better form of leadership and ultimately some accountability on the outcomes of municipal amalgamations. The Town of Hamiota has clearly identified legitimate concerns with the entire process that will negatively affect everyone involved. Already the minister has made concessions for small cottage municipalities to help protect their identity. So why did Manitoba hire a consultant who previously worked on amalgamation of two resort municipalities and is currently employed with one of the largest municipalities in Manitoba that represents urban, suburban, rural and resort communities in one, only to advise the minister to bail on the integrity of his plan to amalgamate all municipalities with a population of less than a thousand people?

Integrity is the last thing Bill 33 will accomplish. We all know it is in the not-too-distant future, after Bill 33 passes, the minister will be changed. Everything that does not work will be the problem of the municipalities, and this bill will pass prior to September 17, 2013.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Just a comment to say thank you for your presentation again. You've travelled a ways to be here. It's important, and that's what these committee hearings are about. It's about government listening to people, giving their presentations and their views. So we appreciate that very much. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Larry, I—reading through your resolution here, it says that you will work for an amalgamation in October 2018. And then I look at the response back from the department saying, no, you will have this by no later than December 1st. Do you feel bullied by this?

Mr. Oakden: That's in another room, I think, tonight, isn't it? Yes, anyway, yes, it's the government forcing a heavy hand on smaller municipalities. I'm not exactly sure what their agenda is, but it's very onerous to us. We work towards balanced budgets, keeping our ratepayers happy and all those good things that living in smaller communities have—has to happen. And now the government's coming along with their heavy hand, as I say, and you will join with you.

We in Hamiota are very lucky because the statement was, you will join with another municipality that is contiguous in lines. We are surrounded by the rural municipality of Hamiota. We've worked with them forever. And so, the fit is there. In fact, we've been talking amalgamation probably for the last half a dozen years. So it's not a new process to us. But we're definitely opposed to the time frame being implemented today.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you very much, and for your contribution. And, clearly, you're supportive of the process, but would like a, you know, more reasonable time frame.

I note in this letter that there's a field consultant has been assigned to your region to provide you with hands-on assistance on technical and other matters specific to your amalgamation plans. Has the field consultant been helpful in—

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Oakden.

Mr. Oakden: He's been there. Helpful, I don't believe, is the proper word. They really don't give guidance. They're there to answer questions, but from a current standpoint, not what the future might entail.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

I'd now like to call on Cliff Kutzan, Rural Municipality of Grandview, and I hope I've pronounced that correctly. *[interjection]*

Do you have some materials for us to distribute?

Mr. Cliff Kutzan (Rural Municipality of Grandview): No, I don't.

Madam Chairperson: You may begin.

Mr. Kutzan: My name's Cliff Kutzan. I'm the reeve of the RM of Grandview. The council of the RM of Grandview wish to express our serious concerns with the government of Manitoba's plan to force municipalities with populations of less than a thousand to amalgamate in time for the 2014 municipal elections. Many items must be considered when councils consider amalgamation, and the short time frame that the Province has imposed is extremely unrealistic.

It is unreasonable to expect us to make sound business decisions in such a short time frame. If the directors of a public company or a co-operative made decisions to amalgamate with such other entities using the guidelines that have been presented by the government of Manitoba for us to follow, you can guarantee that the shareholders and the members would take legal action for the lack of due diligence and good governance practices. At least the shareholders or members would have the opportunity to defeat the proposal with a 'dema'—democratically held voting process. Under Bill 33, there is no avenue of recourse to correct poor decisions. The system of checks and balances have been taken away.

Municipalities are an independent, elected order of government and, as such, the decision to amalgamate rests with them. Also, municipalities are mandated under The Municipal Act to operate in a position of surplus, and so—to do so, not require any funding from the—for their operations from the Province. Therefore, it makes no difference to the finances of the operations of the Province whether there are 200 municipalities or a hundred. Every five-year census would make future amalgamations a very real possibility, since populations change and the thousand-resident figure would again fall under the terms of the proposed legislation.

Under the existing Municipal Act, when municipalities want to amalgamate, application to the Municipal Board is required and must be approved. Before it is approved, the municipalities must demonstrate logical reasoning for the proposed amalgamations, along with substantial evidence of consensus for the approval of the proposal from the relevant taxpayers. This new bill does away with all of this. No longer will there be a need for logical reasoning, and the ratepayers have no say in what

is happening to their municipality. Consensus is completely removed from the equation, as is the need to show any benefits of a proposed amalgamation.

*(19:10)

Several points must be made to the specific arguments put forward by the Province as justification for the amalgamation agenda. There is no link between municipal size, as defined by population, and the relative likelihood of having audits up to date. Also, amalgamation does not change the assessment base available from which to generate tax revenues. Therefore, there won't be any potential for additional revenue without raising taxes. In fact, the Province's increase by 1 per cent of the sales tax will add another item of expense.

We have completed the transition to the public sector accounting, including annual audits on a timely basis, and have received a federal tax rebate annually. We are a municipality of about 650 population. We understand that some of the larger municipalities have not yet accomplished this.

We agree with the AMM position that there are more pressing issues facing municipalities, for example, the massive infrastructure deficit which requires funding. Why waste resources forcing municipalities to amalgamate that have no real economic benefits?

The RM of Grandview financially share the following on a regional basis: Mountainview Planning District, six municipalities, three rural, three urban; development officer shared among three planning districts, Mountainview Planning District, Lakeshore Planning District and the Agassiz Planning District; Handi-Transit is shared by four municipalities, two rural, two urban.

Economic development is shared by eight municipalities, five rural and three urban, and it's called the park agricultural resource co-op. We have a tax-sharing agreement among the members of that. We share any new commercial development raised by the taxes. As a side note, we have attracted a \$10-million hemp processing plant that's just about ready to open up.

The RM of Grandview also share the following services with the Town of Grandview: We share an administrative office, Grandview & District Recreation Commission, Grandview and district library, Grandview landfill and recycling depot, Grandview and district cemetery, Grandview and district fire department, physician recruitment and

retention. How would the proposed amalgamation enhance what is already being done both on a regional and local level?

Municipal councillors receive low remuneration for the work they do in their municipality. They contribute many hours to serve their ratepayers because they are part of the community. Councillors are not interested in costing their ratepayers for more money while covering larger areas under the proposed amalgamation.

Robert L. Bish is a professor emeritus at the University of Victoria, where he was a professor of public administration and economics from 1981 through 1998 and also was co-director of the Local Government Institute from its establishment in 1995 through 2002. In a C.D. Howe Institute commentary where he did an extensive review of scholarly research since 1960s, he wrote, and I paraphrase: Amalgamations forced on the municipalities are provincial governments—are the product of flawed, 19th-century thinking and the bureaucratic urge for centralized control. What's more, he says, smaller and more flexible jurisdictions can often deliver services to residents at a lower cost, throwing in doubt the financial assumption typically used to defend amalgamations. He goes on to say, large and centralized governments will be further removed from their voters and less able to respond effectively to local needs and choices. The key, argues Bish, is a locally flexibility. In conclusion, he states, there is overwhelming evidence that the least expensive local governments are found in systems of small and medium-sized municipalities that also co-operate in providing those services that offer true economies of scale.

In the late 1990s, the Ontario government forced amalgamation of a large number of municipalities, reducing the number from 815 to 445. Very few of these jurisdictions experienced any cost savings. For the majority of them, costs increased. It is simply not the case that big government costs less because they can achieve economics—economy of scale.

And also, the government of Saskatchewan a number of years ago proposed a forced amalgamation of municipalities. Municipalities challenged the decision, and finally the government withdrew their proposal.

We do not feel that the forced amalgamations outlined in Bill 33 changes anything. Municipalities have and will amalgamate if they think that it is beneficial for their communities. They are the ones

that are in a best position to judge when it is most beneficial to do so. Amalgamation should not be the decision that is made by them, by another level of government. In our opinion, the government should reconsider the forced amalgamations and consider the compromises that have been suggested by the AMM.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: I just want to say thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Kutzan, much appreciated. And certainly that's what the committee is for, is to listen to the public, and we do appreciate your coming all the way from your RM which is quite a distance away, so I thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Cliff, for coming out and giving your presentation again. You're outlining points that other municipalities have made. You're entirely right. Keep up the fight. Keep up the work, maybe they'll listen. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you. You clearly have worked very hard to share resources and to partner with people nearby. I think your school also has a lot of students who come in from Valley River. Is that right?

Mr. Kutzan: Yes. The Valley River reserve is—borders our municipality. Probably half of the reserve kids come to Grandview School and the other half go to Roblin because there's a boundary in there, and they are not considered as part of our population.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Briese: Thank you, Cliff, for coming in tonight. I know you came a long way because I've driven to Grandview several times and it is quite a ways from Winnipeg, and we really appreciate the presentation you made.

And I just wonder, have you explored amalgamation with your neighbouring—with your neighbours there over the years? And do you think somewhere down the road it would take place naturally without being a forced amalgamation?

Mr. Kutzan: In the past we have not talked amalgamation because, basically, by what I've outlined on what we share on a regional basis and with the town, that we really basically are amalgamated. Maybe not in law, but we are really

amalgamated because we do, you know, share things.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Thank you, Cliff, for making that long trip in here, and I'm really happy to hear that your hemp plant is almost up and running. I was there for the sod-turning for that, and it's—and you've outlined a perfect plan of co-operation that you did in your presentation and there are so many different areas that you have shared with other municipalities, and you've done that without anybody forcing you. Congratulations. Keep up the good work. You guys deserve better than what you're getting today.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call Susan Stein, rural municipality of Plum Coulee.

Do you have some materials to distribute?

Ms. Susan Stein (Town of Plum Coulee): No.

Madam Chairperson: Then you may begin.

Ms. Stein: I'd like to make one correction—that's a town, not a rural municipality.

Madam Chairperson: Oh.

Ms. Stein: Good evening, Honourable Minister of Local Government Mr. Lemieux and committee members, my name is Susan Stein, and I'm speaking as the CAO of the Town of Plum Coulee.

Today I would like to speak to you regarding Bill 33, The Municipal Modernization Act, better known as the municipal amalgamations act. In November 2012, the NDP government introduced in its Throne Speech that they would be looking at amalgamating all communities of populations of less than 1,000. We immediately informed the Minister of Local Government of our objection to this proposed legislation. We spoke against it at the November AMM annual meeting and the March AMM mayors and reeves meeting at which Mr. Lemieux was present. We wrote letters to Mr. Lemieux, the media, and had many discussions with our residents and the residents and council of the neighbouring municipalities that we were to amalgamate with.

Mr. Lemieux insisted that that the government was at these AMM meetings to listen to us, to take in our objections and to work with us before

introducing the new legislation. Mr. Lemieux and Deputy Minister Linda McFadyen were in attendance and insisted that communities over 750 would still be required to have police services and would still have their policing service.

Well, that is not the case with Bill 33. The new legislation introduced states that the newly and amalgamated municipality would have to make a new agreement with the police service within three years for the entire new municipality or it would switch over to RCMP service. It's in sections 14(1), 14(2) and 14(3) of Bill 33.

* (19:20)

Plum Coulee has a population of 843 in the 2011 census and would be required to amalgamate with the RM of Rhineland, a population of 4,373, and the town of Gretna, a population of 546, also 2011 census numbers. I would like to point out that our Manitoba Health numbers are much higher than this with a population of 1,488 in 2012.

Currently, we contract police from the Altona Police Service. This shared-service policing agreement received the Municipal Excellence Award in 2009. Our amalgamation partners, Gretna and the RM of Rhineland, do not have policing. They have RCMP. This means our policing costs will increase drastically according to the costs that we were given in 2007 when we hit 750 population. We spoke to the RCMP and we spoke to Altona police services. Our residents are very happy with the service we currently have and do not want to lose the police service to go back to RCMP where we received virtually no service. We were told back in 2007 if we went with RCMP we would have to pay; however, we would not get an officer. They would be sent up north where they are needed more. Previously, when a resident would call the RCMP it took days for them to arrive, if they even attended the call at all.

Our police now arrive within 11 minutes for an emergency and non-emergencies within 12 hours. We have no new guarantee that this new municipality will be able to or want to make an agreement with our police service to now cover an increased rural population of 5,762 persons. In fact, a recent conversation with members of the current council of the RM say they are not interested in adding a police service as they see this would be a cost to their residents. This increased cost of policing would remain with the urban area of Plum Coulee and cost our residents more tax dollars with reduced service. Any of the potential savings Mr. Lemieux is

saying there would be would be cut by cutting the number of council or closing administration offices would be eaten up by these costs alone.

This would also affect the Town of Altona as we have a policing agreement with them and we help offset their policing costs and allow them to grow their policing service and expand. This would jeopardize their budget and their community safety as well.

There are residual effects to this bill that this government has not realized beyond just the municipalities that are under 1,000. The NDP has suggested that small municipalities are inefficient—is this a very poor argument. As municipalities are required by law to balance their budgets each year, we have done so and when we have not, we have had a deficit that we have paid it back. Can your government say the same? I think not.

Proof of the arrogance of this government is in the statement of one NDP MLA during a recent legislative session: municipalities with less than 1,000 people are clearly dysfunctional. I take great offence to this statement. I would dare say we are much less dysfunctional than the current provincial government in place. As a small dysfunctional municipality, we share fire services, police protection, a veterinary services board, a regional library, a health board, a landfill, recreation services with other municipalities in order to be cost effective. We do whatever we take to make sure the tax dollars of our residents are used wisely. We also share a planning group which we recently completed a new planning document with four surrounding municipalities that was approved by Minister Lemieux in November of 2012.

Many communities feel their development plan sets a new standard and is being sought as a reference for others doing their development plans. It even received the Manitoba Excellence Planning Award. Under the new legislation, this planning document will need to be redone. This came at a cost of over \$80,000 for consulting fees, as well as time and money spent at meetings, public consultations and administrative hours. Under Bill 33 we will have to do this again with the new council. This is a prime example of wasting taxpayers' money, both municipally and provincially as the provincial government helped with the funding for this development plan.

The Province has recently been citing a report by the Brandon RDI regarding amalgamation. I would

like to point out that this study was paid for by provincial government and no study, I would argue, could look at every situation in our province and just loop everyone into saying that amalgamation is better for all municipalities under 3,000 or with a assessment number. Every study can be countered with another study, so please don't insult Manitoba municipalities. A study by the C.D. Howe Institute states that amalgamation tends to eliminate the very characteristics of local government that are critical with the successful low-cost operations. To quote Mr. Lemieux, it is about negotiation and it is about talking to your neighbours about where you want to be in 10 years. Surely, they have more in common than what separates them. I would then suggest that if this were true, that Mr. Lemieux and Mr. Selinger should be conversing with their Saskatchewan and Ontario neighbours to amalgamate with. I'm sure we could save a lot of administrative costs and salaries if we cut the number of MLAs. Surely, you have more in common with Saskatchewan and Ontario than what separates you.

We agree there are benefits for some communities to amalgamate. We don't dispute that. We're not against amalgamation; however, it must be voluntary and chosen by the people of the community. We agree the provincial government can help in playing a role in this process. However, this is not what is best for the community. We have run the numbers; we have looked at the pros and cons. We are not going into this blind. The NDP government is not only forcing its will on the community—on communities, it is removing public consultations from this process as we've already seen with the removal of the requirement for a referendum on Bill 20.

Citizens will be unable to exercise their rights to let their government know what they think about the future of their communities. This is undemocratic at the best, and at its worst, it's arrogant—or should I say, insolent. This is bullying from a top-down approach. For a government that is bringing in antibullying legislation, they should easily be able to figure out the definition of a bully by looking at their own party.

As the town of Plum Coulee, we have held a public meeting where we had an outstanding turnout, more than that of an increase of 100 per cent on our water rates; this should stand to how the people feel. Not one single resident wanted amalgamation and, in fact, every person there signed a petition against amalgamation that we have forwarded to your

government. We invited the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) to attend or a municipal services officer, but were told that would appear that they were pro-amalgamation. It's your bill; pretty sure it shows that is you're pro-amalgamation.

RM of Rhineland residents also attended this meeting and they don't want to amalgamate either. We want this to be about our choice, our residents' choice and not forced upon us. This should be a democracy, not a dictatorship.

I would like to quote a recent article published in the Winnipeg Free Press on June 4th, and I quote, Mr. Lemieux said, "holdout municipalities should stop behaving like insolent children."

You are calling communities that want to stay strong and independent insolent children? Did you look in the mirror this morning when you woke up, Mr. Lemieux? You have not listened to one word we have said, one suggestion, one idea, not one of the consequences we have regarding amalgamation and our particular circumstance. You are the definition of insolent. You have shown complete lack of respect and been rude and arrogant through this whole process. We have been completely professional in our arguments to date; unfortunately, I don't feel you could say the same. You refer to us as insolent children and howling coyotes.

In that same article Mr. Lemieux also states, there is nothing in the legislation that would grant him the power to pick and choose which municipalities should amalgamate. There are no exemptions, none, zero, nada, squat, nothing; there is no magic wand.

I would question then, why in Bill 33 you are now making amendments for resort communities. Mr. Lemieux, it's your Bill 33, you can make changes, you are just choosing not to.

Your recent announcement that amendments would be made for resort communities because they're healthy proves that you can listen if you choose to. We are very happy that—for these resort communities; however, Plum Coulee, too, is a healthy community. And so we will use that argument to fight this bill's legality if it is passed without an exemption to us. You have set a precedent here.

You stated, and I quote, that you do not want to see these municipalities incur the cost of hiring lawyers to fight this bill. Our residents say fight to the bitter end. Laws need to be fair and this law is

not only fair but is now even more discriminatory and harmful, we feel, to the health of our community.

Madam Chairperson: Excuse me, you have one minute left.

Ms. Stein: Manitoba Local Government has repeatedly said to the AMM that municipal government is at the front lines and they know their communities, they know their people and they know what needs to be done.

Then the Manitoba provincial government should stand by that and let our people make this decision. We know that with growth there are challenges. We want to face those challenges and keep our identity, keep our community spirit, keep our volunteers and our town.

To quote Doug Dobrowolski, the president of the AMM, what the Selinger government is proposing—no, forcing—is about a loss of our heritage, a loss of identity and a loss of a way of life and it will change the landscape of our province forever.

As the Town of Plum Coulee, we believe that landscape will be for the worst.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, I just want to say thank you very much for coming this evening and having your say with regard to this bill. We appreciate all your comments. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: Thanks, Ms. Stein. Why do you think the Province is so strong on pushing the amalgamations? *[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: I'm sorry, Ms. Stein.

Ms. Stein: I believe that it's going to lower the voice of the AMM and all the municipalities; instead of listening to 197 communities, they only have to listen to 105. I also believe that it's going to cut costs for them. There's grants that they can cut because there's a—for example, Community Places grant can only be applied once for every 18 months by a municipality; if three municipalities merge into one, that's a cost savings to them.

So we believe it's a cost savings to the Province, not the municipalities. As well as they're not dealing with the 197 budgets being handed in, they're dealing with 105. So, there's a cost savings, once again, to them.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you. You know, I'm puzzled and maybe you can explain how the population can be 800 and something on the census, but 1,400 and something—*[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: Ms. Stein.

Ms. Stein: Our population on the census was 843 and the Manitoba Health numbers say that there is 1,488; 704 females, 780 males—so men outnumber. I don't know where the difference is. We have an area to the east of us that we have tried to annex, and we were told as early—as late as May of this year to forget about the annexation because we were going to have to amalgamate anyway. Those people share the same postal code; they're just on the other side of the road. So they would also probably be included in the Manitoba Health numbers. This would definitely knock us over the thousand, and we tried to do an annexation but were turned down.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

* (19:30)

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks, Susan, for that excellent presentation. It was very well done. And you just brought up the annexation that you were in the process of doing, and until this announcement was made at the AMM last year, up until that time your annexation was moving ahead in a natural way. Obviously, the reason that it was squashed, then, is so that you do have to amalgamate, or how do you feel about that?

Ms. Stein: Yes, it was moving forward and we were working with Local Government, Community Planning, and once the announcement was wade-made, Community Planning told us to hold off to see what happened with amalgamation first. And when we pushed on it, then we got a response back saying they wouldn't be helping us anymore. And just to—we 'wou'—even if we had the annexation, they would still use the 2011 census numbers, so you might as well amalgamate and accept it.

Mr. Briese: Ms. Stein, the whole exercise here is based on the thousand population. Do you think that that should be one of the lesser criteria on even considering amalgamations, or are there other—what other criteria do you think would be better suited to promote amalgamations?

Ms. Stein: I don't believe the population or the assessment number should actually be used. With the population, you can have a population of 500 and

still have a very financially viable community. As you grow, obviously, it does get bigger, and I recognize that. But we have an assessment of 18 million, and so if you use the 130 million, we would be far from that. But we have been growing dramatically in the last five years. We just completed new—two new subdivisions. We're talking to five new developers about creating affordable housing and seniors housing. We balanced our budget. So I would say, yes, that financial viability should be used, not necessarily assessment or population. If we have a deficit, we pay it back.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no more questions, thank you for your presentation.

I would now like to call on Archie Heinrichs, private citizen.

Do you have materials to distribute?

Mr. Archie Heinrichs (Private Citizen): No, I do not.

Madam Chairperson: Then you may begin.

Mr. Heinrichs: Thank you. I represent the town of Plum Coulee as the mayor of Plum Coulee, but I'm also here today as a citizen of Plum Coulee. As a citizen of Plum Coulee—I know that Susan already mentioned back there that we had public hearings and we had the public come out, and it was actually—there was more residents at our public hearing than there was at our water rate increase, which happened to be a water increased rate of more than 100 per cent, which affects a lot of people's back-pocket tax dollars. They were even more concerned about this amalgamation, and as Susan said back there, too, she said that we had so many people that were just against amalgamation. We have—we felt that, as myself representing the citizens, I felt very, very strong that I needed to represent them on saying absolutely no amalgamation to a town like Plum Coulee.

We are very viable, viable town, and we have something—like our amalgamation, after the amalgamation meeting we had, we had a lot of comments, and comments came out about, you know, this thing about bullying was heard a lot, and that was too bad to have to hear that, but that's—we did hear that a lot. We had a lot of people felt they would lose their pride. They would also, they felt they would just lose their volunteerism because now we're going to be in an area that is a municipality that is so big that by the time, you know, the interests of one end to the other, they felt, like, I do not want to

volunteer for a large-area municipality when there are people that are actually for the town of Plum Coulee. They have a—they have such a strong feeling and they just do not want to go away from that.

We also heard that—we have, like, a volunteer fire department. They felt, well, if they're going to be a volunteer fire department for such a large area, guess what, I don't want to be a volunteer fire department. That could mean the loss of our fire department. We really feel that that is not fair because we have a very, very strong community, and volunteerism, let's face it, on a small community, that's it. If we have to go and pay for everything, it'll cost us a lot more money.

We also have a loss of recreation, maybe, in hand, because we share an arena with the next town over in Winkler. But Winkler is not going to be in this amalgamation. It's going to be the town of—the RM of Rhineland. The RM of Rhineland which has the centre is Altona. They have an arena in there. There's a talk about do we need two arenas. Maybe we'll just get rid of it. But that's not what it's all about. Our kids use that arena. The—it's used all the time. It's something that it would be a tremendous loss to that community feeling. So, we don't want that.

Like, we have a lot of people that are out in the street talking about it right now, their loss of identity and, you know, that community spirit is very important. They feel that the small town will be lost. It's just a small-town feeling that is something that people love. And, like, they have the personalization and we have the representation from council. If this happens, we will have seven members on council, but if it goes into a ward system with a population, we'll only have one representation on that. They feel that they will just not be represented. So, anything that goes to a vote, let's say we need to have a new bridge or a gravel road and spend the money there instead of—well, the arena does need some help; no, we'll just shut the arena because it just costs money. We don't need that.

This is the kind of things that our people are just very, very scared of, and they do not want that. I know we live in a small town. I mean, we're—and we're very, very proud of Plum Coulee; it's a great place to live. We have all the amenities there. Like, we have the paved streets, and so forth, garbage pickups, and et cetera. That—the reason that people move to Plum Coulee is because they didn't want to live in the rural—it they would have chose to live in

rural, that was fine. But they chose to live in Plum Coulee. We do not have any homes other than on paved streets. I mean, this is like—we have got a community that is—it's small. We have a lot of activity going on. But, yet, we want to keep it that way. We do not want to change it.

For example, we have shared services, like she mentioned the RPGA, which is—which, again, was something that we had just finished signing. I know, Mr. Lemieux, you signed it off just in 2013, our planning district. And it's something that we, you know, we spent \$80,000 on getting there. This happens, this amalgamation—guess what? That's \$80,000 thrown away. We now have to do it again because this is not the way that it's written up. It's written up as a—as these four municipalities.

We have, like, a lot of things like shared services on recreation. We have a library, a veterinarian service, landfill, fire department, police service. We have a lot of things that we share. We do not feel amalgamation—because that is what amalgamation is. We do already do that. The only thing is we're sharing it with municipalities all around. We do the police service with Altona, which is not in the RM of Rhineland. As you heard there, like the police service has to be done after 750 people, which we have already reached. But, if we're not going to be a town at a thousand, guess what? We're still stuck with that bill because the way the bill reads, we're going to have police, even after three years we will still have to pay for policing. Even though we were an urban centre previously, that's why we have to pay for policing. There's a lot of urban centres out there well over a thousand. They don't have to pay an extra cost to policing. It's part of the Province fee that's paying for it. So why did we have to do that?

These are extra costs that we feel are just not fair to a small town like Plum Coulee. We feel that you need to make provisions somewhere in this bill to look at some of these things, as far as us being a viable community. Our population has been increasing. You know, our last—last one went up again, I think 9 and a half per cent, which is, like, as a small town, we think that is great. I mean, yes, we're not quite to a thousand. One reading says we are, one says it isn't, but let's face it, it would be very close. That—to me, that's not what it's all about. It's not that. It's that we have a strong, strong community.

We have a problem right now. Since the announcement, it has made that—we have—right now I

think we have six developers in town that are working on all kinds of housing, like, we have affordable housing being worked on, multiple family homes and seniors and also rentals. These six developers are all starting to talk like, well, if this amalgamation comes through, the land might be able to—might be getting devaluated because now it's not going to be a separate entity. It's not going to be a town anymore. So, if this all gets devaluated, these guys are thinking of stopping. They don't want to work in Plum Coulee anymore. They feel that we don't have what it takes anymore.

Our local credit union took our line of credit away because they don't know where we're going to stand legally because you're forcing us to amalgamate. They're saying, well, if you're being forced to amalgamate, we can't give you—it's a good thing we don't need the line of credit right now but, I mean, if we had a huge disaster, we might need it. And it's like why, you know, why even our local financial says that we can't even have a line of credit because we're not viable. It's, you know, because the law says that we will not be able to have something definite, whether we are going to be Plum Coulee or whether we're going to be a new municipality, whatever the new name might be.

* (19:40)

So, either—and we've also worked on things, like, we had a waste water with three other communities that we worked on, and I think it was supposed to end up costing like \$27 million. Well, we said no to that because, we right now, sitting at waste water, we have the capacity of over doubling our population right now. So we don't feel that's anything. We have room to grow to twice the amount of population that we have today. We are a strong community. We have infrastructure on the go constantly, and the infrastructure we are—I know, 25 years ago, when I was in council first, it—we were far behind. But today we have moved ahead a long ways and we are—in maybe the next five years we'll have all of our sewers realigned to a hundred-year service guarantee, to our streets and our sidewalks, everything up to date. I mean, it's like a small neat town. Like, why, why would you want to take that away? Because once it goes to a municipality, who knows what they're going to focus on? Remember, we're only having one vote at that time. We just feel like we are just at the end of it; we just don't like it.

We also had—you know, our assets grew—this last asset there—the small town that we have, we grew by

25 per cent, which is huge. That's a big growth for a small town.

So again—and now, too, if this—if we are forced to amalgamate, this is going to be a lot of cost to our town and time and resources and just numerous things.

Our office right now, if we should have to amalgamate, our office would be maybe—it might be somewhere else in the municipality. We don't know. But at the same time, we have a police office in our office, so we would still have to keep it running because for three more years we definitely have to have police there, and after that it's up to the decision of the larger municipality.

Madam Chairperson: You have one minute left.

Mr. Heinrichs: One minute, thank you.

So we have a lot of things that we've shared in our town and we feel that, you know, we're viable, just like some of the—I think it was mentioned that—the Free Press there, Mr. Lemieux—that, you know, that you might look at the fact that these beach towns are viable. I mean, there's—I think it's Victoria Beach, Dunnottar, Onanole and Oak Lake, so forth.

In 1901, was—a village was formed; 2001 became a town; soon to be a city in Plum Coulee.

You know, I think that Mr. Lemieux and your NDP, it might seem that we're acting like insolent children as we were called earlier, I don't think so. I think we're responsible citizens. I think that we are working hard. I know myself as the mayor, I'm elected by the people, and the people have spoken in Plum Coulee, constantly telling me, please, get this thing changed. We do not want to amalgamate. If we do not have to, we do not want it, it's not for everybody. We knew that it can happen to places that want it, but not in this place. Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much, Mr. Heinrichs. Much appreciated for your presentation. I know you've come a ways to do it, so thank you so much. Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Mr. Heinrichs, for your presentation. It was certainly done with a lot of passion and I know that that passion is real.

I've watched the town of Plum Coulee for the last six years grow. Every year it grows, there's more expansions.

Some of the things that you left out, and Ms. Stein left out as well, was that you do have a foundation in town. That foundation in the town is there to preserve the identity and preserve the heritage of Plum Coulee. Those are important things that make and bind a community. The reason that it is growing is that there is such a community spirit and sense of family in the town. You mentioned the volunteerism too.

This bill doesn't seem to have any flexibility. The criteria has been set and it doesn't seem to be flexible at all. Why do you suppose this minister has been so adamant that you will do what I say; that's his motto. Why do you feel he's like that?

Mr. Heinrichs: Why do I feel that? It's like, at first when this bill came on the table, I felt it was just a ploy to get away from what the government needs to address itself is, there's a lot of infrastructure needed in this whole province. And I felt that—you know, I know that there was a lot of problems with the budgeting and it wasn't, you know—you went from another session onto another session of not getting the budgeting done. I know budgeting isn't easy; I mean, we struggle with it in our town all the time, but we still make it. And we've—and I guess when this bill came out, we felt it was a ploy that you were doing to—and this would also give a lot of communities unrest and have something else to think about, and we really felt it wasn't necessary. That was how Plum Coulee felt.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you so much. I think one of the things that I'm hearing from you is that you think that where there is a municipality like yours, which is growing rapidly and will shortly be over a thousand, that that should be taken into consideration. What would you estimate the population would be, say, in five or 10 years?

Mr. Heinrichs: Well, I do know that the estimation is that at, the rate of growth right now, our population would be over the thousand very shortly, like, before this 2015 deadline. And in five years, I would presume we could be another 20 per cent higher at least yet. So there is tremendous growth in the area, and it is just—there's people moving in constantly. Our local developers are building these units, and the next day the sold sign is gone and they're building another one, and they're building another one. They're just not stopping. We've got new developments in town that are happening right

now where they have another 27 units, and it's just not stopping.

So it's going to grow. It's—the next five years, it's going to grow. When I say 20 per cent, I could be low, but I'm being conservative there to say it's 20 per cent, but for sure. And we will be very strong. Like I said, it'll be a city soon.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

Now I'd like to call on June Letkeman, private citizen.

Do you have some materials to hand out?

Ms. June Letkeman (Private Citizen): No.

Madam Chairperson: Then you may begin.

Ms. Letkeman: Thank you. Good evening, Madam Chairman, Mr. Gerrard, Minister of Local Government, Mr. Lemieux, and members of the Legislature. My name is June Letkeman and I'm deputy mayor for the town of Plum Coulee. Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight.

I am very upset with this government and the way they are bullying us and making us amalgamate without even listening to us. First and foremost, I think that Bill 33 is totally against our democratic rights. We should have the freedom to decide whether or not we want to amalgamate and when. To tell us that we have to is dictating to us, and I still believe that we live in a democratic society, do we not? It's ironic that you are passing an antibullying bill, and bullying is exactly what you are doing.

I am not against amalgamation, and I know that it has worked for some municipalities, but I feel very strongly that it will not work for Plum Coulee. Plum Coulee has shown amazing growth in the last five years, and this will continue, if you let us. The talk of amalgamation has hindered us already because developers are leery about starting something and worried how it will work out with the amalgamation. Also, the credit union would not give us our line of credit this spring because of talks of amalgamation. Thank goodness we budget responsibly and didn't need it.

This spring we held a public meeting in regards to the amalgamation, and our citizens voted unanimously against amalgamation. We had more people out to this meeting than when we had a public meeting to raise our water rates 100 per cent. Even the RM residents that attended voted against

amalgamation. Does that not tell us something? We are elected to represent our citizens and clear—and I feel very strongly that we should listen to them. In two—our citizens spoke loud and clear that they do not want amalgamation.

In 2012, we had the highest increase in assessment in our region. Our assessment went up 25 per cent. This shows growth. Projection is that we would hit a thousand population by 2015. We are growing, and that shows progress and good management.

A big issue for our community is our policing. Currently, we have an agreement with the Altona Police Service to police our town. They have been doing a great job, and crime is down and people are very happy with the services they provide in Plum Coulee. They take an active part in our community by holding bike rodeos at school, doing criminal record checks and many other things. We know that, if we had RCMP policing our town, we do not get those same services. Nothing against the RCMP, but they do not have the manpower to police our bylaws, do bike rodeos or be a constant present, et cetera. If we amalgamate, we would have to go back to the RCMP, which would cost us more and give our residents less service.

* (19:50)

It just does not make any sense. I'm sure that the NDP government did not even think of this when they asked us to amalgamate. They have not done their homework, and as far as I'm concerned, they are downloading on the rural municipalities to save themselves money even though it will cost our taxpayers more.

It was suggested that a good reason to amalgamate would be a savings to our water and waste water. Well, that's not true either. Our study says that we have capacity to double our lagoon and costs would be much higher to go regional. Lagoon upgrades would be about a half a million dollars and a waste water system with Winkler started at \$27 million, way out of our price bracket. We currently share our water system with the Pembina Valley Co-op and 17 other communities and it is working well.

We do try to save money where we can and I really believe we do a very good job, much better than our NDP government, I might add. We currently have shared services such as the police, the

fire department, veterinary services, library services and medical clinic.

We just recently completed the development plan which is shared with the RM of Rhineland, the village of Gretna, Town of Altona and the Town of Plum Coulee. The cost of this study was more than \$80,000 and we even got an award for this plan. This plan would all have to be redone should we amalgamate and our money that we spent would be down the drain. Is this fiscal responsibility, I ask you? I think not.

I feel that we would lose our identity should we have to amalgamate. We would also lose many of our volunteers. We would lose representation; less council means more work for councillors and it would be harder to find people to run. With only one or two councillors to represent our town we could lose our say in anything.

An example is our Prairieview Elevator Museum. The Town of Plum Coulee owns the elevator and it was not being used, so four years ago we decided to move our museum into our elevator. It has been a huge success and brings a lot of people to our town. This year we have 22 pages of visitors. So just imagine if we wanted something in our museum and we only have one or two votes and the rest of council felt it was more important to spend on a bridge or gravel or whatever; we would be the loser, I'm sure. This is just one example. There would be a lot more issues where we lose our say.

I feel that forced amalgamations simply create unadded angst and resentment, increases costs and reduces effectiveness.

Ontario, for example, forced amalgamations in a number of areas supposedly for their own good. It turned out more for their own bad. In an article in the Free Press I read about Prince Edward County. There, a number of township governments, towns and villages were forced together. Costs increased substantially and the new government structure with all its committees and procedures reduced effectiveness and left lasting bitterness, trying the patience of every one affected. Along the way it produced multilayered bureaucracies and drastically complicated access to services for many citizens.

A favourite expression of my late husband, Jerry, was why fix it if it ain't broke? And that is exactly how I feel about amalgamation. We are doing well. We have a balanced budget. We are fiscally responsible, which is more than I can say

about our NDP government. So why force us to amalgamate? The Province should allow local ratepayers to have the last word on this subject, and our residents voted a resounding no to amalgamation.

This province was built on small communities that have grown; amalgamation is not the answer in all cases and certainly not for Plum Coulee. We were incorporated into a village in 1901 and a town in 2001. We plan on still being here and we will fight this amalgamation. Our residents have asked us to fight this bill and we will with legal action if required. So stop bullying us and give us some respect.

Thank you for your attention.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, thank you very much for coming out this evening. I apologize, I have a bad cold, but thank you so much for coming and drive carefully back home with you and whoever you came with tonight. Thank you so much.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Mrs. Letkeman, for being here today and giving a resounding report or presentation. And it's—I find it amazing, three people from the same community can make a presentation and very, very little of it is a duplication.

You talked about certain things, and you talked about how the town has grown, when it started, and now the town has got to where it is. And, as you look around throughout southern Manitoba, and I know that you're familiar with that area that you've seen some towns that grow and some that don't, that's part of evolution. That's the part of evolution we in rural Manitoba understand, and I can say, quite frankly, that the town of Plum Coulee grows because of the desire that they want to grow because of the volunteerism, and I know that you're a perfect example of that. I think you're on every board in town, and you make it happen. The local amenities that you have are amenities that you can afford. You only have what you can afford. You live within your means, and I congratulate the town for doing that.

I was very shocked tonight to find out that your line of credit has been jeopardized by this minister and the NDP government. Were they made aware of the fact that your line of credit has been jeopardized by their very heavy-handed approach to what you have to do when you have been balancing your budget?

Ms. Letkeman: I think we tried to make them aware of it, but, unfortunately, Mr. Lemieux was not listening to us.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. Thanks so much.

It's exciting to see your community growing the way it is, and I have a sense that part of the reason that it's growing is because of the municipal structure that you've got and the way that people are coming together in the community and attracting new businesses, new people.

Do you want to tell us a little bit more about this?

Ms. Letkeman: We have an excellent town council, and I really believe that we all love our community and we try our best to develop it further. We work with developers, and we—every opportunity we get we try to use.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

I'd now like to call Steve Martens, private citizen.

Do you have some materials to distribute?

Mr. Steve Martens (Private Citizen): No, I do not.

Madam Chairperson: You may begin.

Mr. Martens: Thanks for giving me the opportunity to talk today. I'm Steve Martens, I'm councillor for the Town of Plum Coulee. Hopefully, I don't repeat too much here, Cliff.

So, yes, as everybody else did point out, we did consult our public because that is our primary job as council members, and our public were speaking very loudly at our public meeting regarding the no need for amalgamation nor any desire for amalgamation. Plus, any conversations I have had since with our ratepayers has been the same. At our public group meeting, there was also plenty of rural residents, and all of them have also expressed to me that they see Plum Coulee does not need to amalgamate to continue and to grow.

In the 2012 assessment, we had an increase of 25 per cent, and this shows significant growth. And our population increase has also increased by 9.5 per cent, according to the last census. According to the RPGA projections, we will hit 1,000 residents by 2015-1016. If we are forced to amalgamate into a larger municipality, we will lose volunteers. We will

lose our identity. We will lose local events. If forced to amalgamate, our council of five, Gretna's council of five, will become one council of seven in the rural municipality so that will reduce 17 reps in our area down to seven. That's going to increase significantly time, commitment and effort by all of these council members. I, as a young working father, would not be able to run for that council position because I would not have time. Along with the higher time commitment is going to be significantly higher council indemnities because it's going to be significant work and people are not going to do it for free.

* (20:00)

Plum Coulee saves money every chance we have, and that is part of why we have shared-service agreements with our rural municipalities surrounding us, plus surrounding towns like Altona. Altona shares their police service with us, which gives us a fantastic police presence. At our local Plum Fest this year, we had an officer patrolling Main Street constantly, all day long, from morning 'til night. And, honestly, after his shift was over, just to emphasize our community, he got out of his uniform and he came back to Plum Coulee and he joined in the festivities with us for the rest of the evening. I fear that that is going to be non-existent with an RCMP police service. That kind of connection our cops will not have with our residents.

Other things we cost-share and service-share with our rural municipality is our fire department. We have a regional development group which I'm very pleased that I was a part of. We got to write this plan and it's an amazing plan, it's provincially recognized, everybody was watching us write this because it was new. We were involved with all of the 'municipal'—all of the different levels of government while writing this and it was a fantastic document which, unfortunately, may mean moot after this. It was a huge expense, \$80,000, and partial—part of that was from the provincial government. Hopefully, it does not disappear.

We also share veterinary services, a library, a clinic, a landfill and we even have a recycling network with over a dozen communities contributing. We are seeing growth. Part of that is because of spin off of Winkler. Winkler's one of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba. All of you are aware of that and we are only 12 kilometres away. Developers are seeing serious potential in developing in Plum Coulee, so that's why they're

knocking on our door. There's six of them and they are all putting on the brakes because of this proposed bill.

As far as major infrastructure goes, one major part of a small town's infrastructure is their waste water treatment. Our recent study shows that our lagoon is at 50 per cent capacity and if we double in size, double in population, we will not need to expand our lagoon 'til 2028. That gives us plenty of time to plan, look forward, have some money set aside and do the project.

Bill 33 is bullying. It is undemocratic and it is really, really a disgusting slap in the face for—from democracy. It's sad that it has happened. Amalgamation has, in some instances, could be useful, could be beneficial to all parties, not all. It has to be a voluntary thing and if it is forced, it will become very hostile which is not productive for anybody.

So, in closing, please change the bill so that it says it is voluntary and not a requirement, and this is coming from the residents of Plum Coulee. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much for representing your community. I know we've heard other people from Plum Coulee this evening. And thank you so much for coming out tonight. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Steve, for coming out tonight. You're a younger member of councillor; it is quite often we see the older age group on councils. I was just wondering what your inspiration for being on council in Plum Coulee. *[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Martens.

Mr. Martens: Sorry. My inspiration in Plum Coulee: I was born in Plum Coulee, raised in Plum Coulee and moved away for a couple of years and returned home to raise my family.

So, my inspiration for 'beco'—for joining council was to ensure that our community had a future, had a strong future and we were going to be progressive and planning, forward-thinking, and I am very happy to say that that is exactly what I found when I walked in the council doors—is Plum Coulee is very financially viable, everything is well set up, everything is thought—looking towards the future and it's an excellent town and it is excellently managed.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Mr. 'Goer'—pardon me—Mr. Ewasko.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Thank you, Mr. Martens, for your presentation. Just to add to something that my colleague had mentioned earlier, all the presentations were different from Plum Coulee, but what I really enjoyed was the few points that you ended up repeating through all four of them. And I find that in, sometimes, when you see that people are listening, they're not necessarily hearing. So most of the time, when you do end up repeating certain things, hopefully, it does start to sink in, and this government will be listening and hearing you and Plum Coulee and the other municipalities that are here to present. So thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: Steve, you did an excellent job, and you're what all—all—municipalities want to see, a young individual with a vision, with a dream and with a passion. And you stated it very clearly, that if it was your municipality, or your town was to amalgamate in a larger municipality, you would not be able to participate. What a loss that will be. What a loss that would be to the future of the whole municipality, that you would not be able to compete—or to be a part of making the decisions for your family and the future as well. That would be a shame to lose people like you, young people that have a job and have a family responsibility and willing to give the extra time and go that extra mile to tell everyone what is necessary for the town to grow. I congratulate you. We need a lot more of you in all the councils and in government.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

I would now like to call on Lloyd Penner, private citizen.

Mr. Penner, do you have materials to distribute?

Mr. Lloyd Penner (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

Madam Chairperson: Then you may begin.

Mr. Penner: Thank you. I'm not the young one from Plum Coulee. So, Mr. Gerrard and Mr. Lemieux and committee members, I have lived in Plum Coulee for the last 60 years, and I've always been proud of it. The people of Plum Coulee do not want amalgamation. We've had public hearings and all the people in attendance—attendance were opposed to it. Geographically, it doesn't make any sense to amalgamate with the RM of Rhineland because our

high schools, hospitals and most of the job opportunities are west of Plum Coulee, so it—the draw is naturally to the west.

The town has had good growth over the last 10 years and continues to grow. A developer has just finished servicing over 20 lots—27 lots, I believe it is. We are working with six different developers at this time, with different types of housing, such as affordable housing, seniors housing, multiple housing and rental properties. We are currently—we currently have shared services with police department, fire, veterinary clinics, libraries, medical clinics and a development plan with a—which is the RPGA, which we've just completed in the last year and spent a lot of money on getting it done. If we amalgamate, this plan will have to be redone, obviously.

Police services are unique in Plum Coulee, as we share this service with Altona, and if we are forced to amalgamate with our RM, we will lose this service eventually and be back with the RCMP where we only have limited service. If forced to amalgamate, we will certainly lose our identity, and it will make it more difficult to find volunteers who are committed to their community. And, with only one or two reps on the next council, compared to possibly four or five from the rural, we wouldn't get a fair rep. The rural municipality has different needs than what the urban municipality does. So I would like to just say, stop the bullying and rethink the forced amalgamation. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

* (20:10)

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much for coming out this evening, and it's nice to see you again. And drive carefully on your way home. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Lloyd, for the presentation. And I know that your heart is certainly in Plum Coulee, and you have done a lot of good work there. There's no question in my mind and—but at some point, I know that you're ready to hand the reins over to people like Steve. You'd be more than happy to do that, but that wouldn't stop you from being a volunteer.

And when you look at the situation of the annexation that you were in the process of doing, and it was stopped, and it was stopped by the department,

do you feel that that was the proper thing for the department to limit the growth that was already there, that people wanted to amalgamate, and here, now, they're forcing you to amalgamate in something else? Do you feel that that's the right way of doing things?

Mr. Penner: No, I feel that was—we got a bum rap on that, because it would have helped us putting—put our population over the 1,000 mark, and it would have brought an extra business into—or extra two businesses into town.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

I would now like to call on Wayne Reimer, private citizen.

Do you have some materials to distribute?

Mr. Wayne Reimer (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

Madam Chairperson: You may begin.

Mr. Reimer: Good evening, committee members. My name is Wayne Reimer. I'm speaking as a resident and a councillor of the Town of Plum Coulee.

Today I'm speaking to you in regards to Bill 33, The Municipal Modernization Act. We feel, as a community of 843 during the last 2011 census and a very strong growth of at least 72 new residents in the last year alone, we are very strongly opposed to the amalgamation as a growing community.

We have completed two residential developments in the last two years and have created 27 single-family residential lots and 40 multi-family lots, totalling 67 new lots, of which 17 are already completed and another 10 are scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2014. That is an increased population of another 67 persons based on 2.5 persons per home.

By 2015, we are projected and anticipate to reach the thousand population threshold and surpass it. We currently are working with more than five developers on creating seniors housing and affordable housing. Your party has cited numerous reasons such as PSAB requirements, audits not being completed and accessibility to grants as some of the reasons for amalgamation. We do not feel that the blame and the lack of training the Province provided and the lack of support they provided with PSAB to the auditors should be put on the backs of our municipalities. The Province needs to provide CAOs,

financial officers and auditors better training to complete this process before putting the blame on the small backs—on the small communities.

There are many large communities that have not completed their audits as well. This is not a localized issue to communities of less than a thousand. We have done our due diligence in hiring the auditor that the Province hired to help complete the PSAB requirements. This is unfair to blame small municipalities when larger municipalities have the same concern.

As I mentioned earlier, accessibility to grants were brought up as a reason small communities should amalgamate. An example I would like to give is a Community Places provincial grant that we have benefited from, as well as the surrounding communities. Should the NDP force amalgamation on us, one of the three communities can benefit from this grant—sorry—only one of the three communities can benefit from this grant, as a municipality can 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.

Just a few months ago, our Pembina Valley Tourism Association was told by the Province, either you amalgamate or we cut your funding. Even upon amalgamating, the funding was cut, so only one of them were getting the same funding as before.

In 2011, we began an annexation with a provincial government department of Manitoba community planning that has been put on hold ever since the NDP Throne Speech. All annexations must be approved by Mr. Lemieux. As recently as May of this year, we tried to proceed but were told as even if the annexation were to be able to proceed, we would be required to amalgamate, so we might as well just accept amalgamation.

We feel that Mr. 'Maloo'—Mr. Lemieux, Mr. Selinger and the NDP have not considered some of the negatives of amalgamation. The potential loss of local identity, the loss of community spirit, volunteerism and, yes, that small-town feeling. Our residents choose to live in a small community. They want that personalization. They will now feel the huge loss of representation. Fewer councillors mean it is more difficult to talk to an elected official to have your voice heard. As well, the new municipality would have a council of seven with a mayor/reeve being elected at large. If we divide a new municipality into wards, whether by population or

land mass, we would only have one or two seats on a council of seven. This means Plum Coulee does not have a say in its own municipality.

Amalgamations are time and resource-consuming and are significant costs that occur to all communities involved, such as town planning schemes, human resource management requirements. Initially, jobs may be lost, many qualified people will have to move to remain in the same field, including leaving our province to find employment. This is not a good economic plan for a town or a province. The long-term costs will increase as larger communities will be required to have specialized, trained staff, administration staff, as proven by the C.D. Howe Institute study on amalgamation.

The provincial NDP government has repeatedly said there will be savings in administration, savings in equipment, savings in infrastructure. But we don't see it. The sewers still need work. The same streets require paving. This doesn't change. Many of our residents are immigrants and seniors and many do not use online banking to make their payments, and are one-vehicle families. In fact, 75.9 per cent of our residents still pay their bills, by cheque or cash, walking into our town office. If we were to amalgamate and close our office, they would have to travel a distance of 28 kilometres to the nearest office to pay a utility bill or a tax bill or to speak to any staff member, or a question. That is not economical and that is not cost-saving. If we keep the Plum Coulee office open, that means no administrative savings. Mr. Lemieux insists there will be. I don't see it. Any potential savings in administration will need to go to cover the extra RCMP costs that will occur due to amalgamation.

As far as equipment, we do not see a cost saving in equipment. Example: Our lawn tractors run eight hours a day. They can't be shared in other municipalities. We use our equipment. The only savings would be if neighbouring municipality would like to pay for it, and I don't believe that's going to happen.

This government has taken on the approach that they can do whatever they want, cancel million-dollar contracts with the Assiniboia Downs, collect 1 per cent increase in the PST without a referendum or law even being passed, and now involves itself in part of municipal politics where it doesn't belong. We need to push through 'regis'—legislation and seriously hope you consider the ramifications of this bill and abolish it or make it—

make the appropriate changes before you pass this bill.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Once again, thank you very much for representing your community, and we've heard a few people from Plum Coulee already this evening and had the chance to speak to many of you before, and I thank you again for coming out this evening, because that's what committee hearings are all about, be able to speak to your elected representatives and give us your point of view and some of your ideas and suggestions. So thank you so much. Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: And thanks, Wayne, for the presentation. You—you've touched on many, many issues again that haven't been addressed by the other presenters from Plum Coulee.

It's unbelievable that the minister has ignored the letters and the words from the municipality. And when you're planning district or your economic development plan, which costs around \$80,000, wins an award—wins an award, it's a model. It's a model for the rest of the province and is being ignored as well. And, yet, the heavy hand of the Big Brother says we can do it better, and yet they've never put anything on the record. And as late as today—as late as today—the minister said, we are looking for advice—we're looking for advice—to make this bill compatible to as many people as possible.

And I think tonight you gave him the proper advice. And I believe you said to abolish it. I think you've made a very good point and I hope that the minister takes this to heart.

Thank you for your presentation.

* (20:20)

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Briese, did I see your hand up?

Mr. Briese: No.

Madam Chairperson: No. Seeing no further questions then, thank you very much for your presentation.

I'd now like to call on Jack Wiebe, private citizen.

Do you have some materials to distribute?

Mr. Jack Wiebe (Private Citizen): Pardon me?

Madam Chairperson: Do you have some materials?

Mr. Wiebe: No, I do not; it will just be verbal.

Madam Chairperson: You may begin then.

Mr. Wiebe: Thanks for giving me the time. I'm from the RM of Rhineland. I'm a—we run a construction business next to the town of Plum Coulee.

And I am concerned about the process about Bill 33, how it's being handled. I feel there isn't enough time, and how it's being done, and it's not democratic. Like, there's been public representatives being elected, and they've had no say in what—and there was no talk about that even before, so there's been no say about how this is being structured or handled or anything. So I really feel we're jeopardizing democracy in the process. You know, whether we're yea or nay, but I don't—just don't like how we—how it's—how we're being dealt.

And, you know, another thing I was disappointed with is we had a public meeting—and I guess some of this stuff we're repeating ourselves—but there was mostly opposition towards it. There was also a lot curiosity. But with curiosity, if you don't know what you're dealing with, you tend to have negativity. So there was a lot of negativity on that part. And I think part of that was due to the minister's office was asked to have representation at that meeting, to either send consultants down, or his assistant, or whoever he has for help, and if they can't be there to answer questions, how can people make a decision? And with that—and it's nature: If you don't know what you're doing, and people can't answer questions on something new, you are going to be negative. I mean, that's a—you know, I mean, everybody's scared of something you don't know nothing about. And then if they come across and say, you know—and I hear some of the comments that came out of Brandon, you know, you can't help but be negative. So—and, you know, those are one of the things that really bothered me. And, you know with that—yes, it just should have had more discussion.

And, you know, with that—like the town has been growing. And, you know, myself, I did a subdivision in town for 27 lots. They're all full. In the beginning it was a little slow, but the last while, it went fast. And now I'm in the process of getting another one going. But, on the other hand, like, I'm in the RM of Rhineland, so I've put application into Rhineland. We've made a deal with the Town of Plum Coulee for infrastructure, for 'sewey and wat'—sewage and water, and I think we can make that work. But now when I'm discussing with planning—and I'd like to ask you this question, and maybe I'm out of line. But, if I can ask you a question and if you can answer me

later, I'd appreciate that. Is this amalgamation now—until this is all settled, yea or nay or how it's going to be done—is my subdivision in jeopardy? Am I wasting my time going to the planning branch and asking for approval for a subdivision? If the town—if I can cut a deal—if the town can cut a deal with the RM of Rhineland and Plum Coulee, will I get approval for a subdivision, or will this amalgamation process stop me? And if it does, I mean, I'm worried about that.

And I'm also really worried about, when I heard before that the Town of Plum Coulee's credit line has been cut. Myself, as a business person, any time your line of credit gets cut, it doesn't matter who you are, it's not a good thing. And it's been cut for no reason. It isn't been cut because of their poor management. Normally, your line of credit gets cut because of poor management; in this case it's been cut because of something that maybe happen, you know, and that's maybe scary.

So I guess that needs to be put to bed with the financial institution. Is—are they—is the financial institution in jeopardy if amalgamation happens and the bills aren't going to be paid?

And I guess the other thing I, you know, I feel I'd like to see as an employer, you know, running our business, you know, we employ 40 to 50 people and, you know, I'd like to see Plum Coulee see its identity and negotiate deals with the RM of Rhineland, not like this. You know, negotiate, negotiate, negotiate and deal. You know, that's how business is, that how good things go down. It doesn't go down by saying, tomorrow you're going to do this, and that never works that well.

And, I guess in the other hand, with regionalization and some of the departments I've worked with, I've seen the highways department—it used to be the Manitoba Department of Highways and then it went to MIT, you know, that's all been regionalized and, you know, they've gone from their districts to their, you know, they, again, they went from, you know, 12 districts down to three or four, you know. And we're not saving any money doing that, from what I'm seeing. You know, we're just building more administration and I'm seeing that I—locally, I've sat on the RHA boards, or the committees, and now, too, you know, I mean, they're having trouble paying their bills. And now, like, our RHA, Boundary Trails, just had to take Steinbach over because they were broke. And, you know, with that, we inherited a million and a half dollars' worth

of debt and this comes with the big regionalization thing again, you know, like, we have to be very careful what we build that we can survive, that we can, you know, sustain it.

You know, so those are—those—and there's the RHA and the other thing is a school division, you know, how they've expanded. Like, our local school division now, we have a school division that runs from Altona, the RM of Rhineland, all the way to the Ontario border and up. Guys, that's huge. And, you know, they don't communicate and the cost is huge. Cliff can tell you that, you know, that's a big part of his riding. You know, he has a huge riding and it's pretty much all of RM of Rhineland.

You know, and the offices we build now, like in Winkler, our office now, it's bigger than our biggest business is. You know, they—who can—they can afford it. Triple E, Lode King, couldn't afford their \$5-million office, but who could? The school division can.

You know, and these are the things I'm scared that we're not building more of because we can't afford them and keep up our sewer, our water, our streets; all the main things we need to still have under—doesn't matter what wing we fly under, people still need all these day-to-day items.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Wiebe, for coming out and certainly expressing your views. We appreciate it very much. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Floor Comment: You couldn't answer my question, eh?

Madam Chairperson: I'm sorry, this is—the process is that this is an opportunity for you to present, but not to ask questions.

Floor Comment: Okay.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. We have—we do have some questions from the committee, though.

Mr. Pedersen: I was waiting for the minister to answer you, but, I guess, apparently he wasn't—not feeling like he should.

I was at the meeting in Plum Coulee, the public meeting, and I can attest to the will of the meeting there. Jack, you run a very successful construction business, a large business. Municipalities run like a

business, they have to. As a businessman would you take on another company in a process like this forced amalgamation? Would you just, at the drop of a hat, pick up another company without due diligence?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I mean, we all know the answer to that. You wouldn't. I mean, you have to do homework.

* (20:30)

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, thank you very much for your presentation. You're putting in a—I think it's a 27-unit development? *[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: Sorry, Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: Oh, sorry.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm—I did a 27, which is all full, and I'm looking at a 40 to 50, which is in the RM of Rhineland now.

Mr. Gerrard: So one of the things that I would ask you is what do you need in terms of certainty in order to proceed.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I've approached the RM, and the RM seems to be in favour. The RM has talked to the Town of Plum Coulee, and I need their services. And we feel we can come to an agreement, and we think the town and the RM can come to an agreement on taxes because, you know, whatever the town gives infrastructure, it needs to be paid for, and I'm willing to work with them and do the development, and then I need help from the planning department to get—to approve it. That's the next step where I'm at, and I'm concerned and I—you know, it hasn't been official, but I've talked and I've kind of been told, you know, you better hang tough until the smoke clears on all this amalgamation business.

Mr. Graydon: Thanks for your presentation tonight, Jack. You did a great job as well.

Perhaps what you could do is just elaborate on how far out of Plum Coulee you are. Like, I'm pretty sure that if you stretched your arms out from your shop, that you're going to touch the boundary of Plum Coulee. That's another business. If it was to—if Plum Coulee was able to do that annexation that they had in place, it would have been another tax base for the town. So maybe just give the committee a feeling of how close you are to being inside the town limits.

Mr. Wiebe: I mean, we're at the junction of 14 and PR 306, and we're right—we're 'boundaring' 306. So I mean we 'boundar'—Highway 14's our frontage, and the side yard is Highway 306, you know, so we're right in the corner. You know, the hotel, the truck stop, that's all down the highway just quarter mile, half a mile from us.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

I would now like to call on Ernie Wiebe, private citizen. No? Okay, Mr. Wiebe will go to the bottom of the list.

Kristine Shields, private citizen. *[interjection]* Do you have a presentation? No? Okay, thank you.

I'd now like to call on Rick Gamble, mayor, Village of Dunnottar. I hope I got it right.

Do you have some materials to distribute?

Mr. Rick Gamble (Village of Dunnottar): I do.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Our staff will help you. And you may start.

Mr. Gamble: Okay, thank you. Good evening to the members of the committee. And, as mayor of the Village of Dunnottar, I stand before you to speak in opposition to Bill 33 in its current form.

I have lived in the—in Dunnottar for 29 years and as a resident, ratepayer and a member of local government for the last 15 years. I am well aware of the impacts this legislation will have on our village. I am speaking today on behalf of the village and its duly elected council, but also on behalf of numerous residents and ratepayers, some of whom have taken the time to write. We have on file hundreds of letters and emails, and many of which have been sent to the Premier (Mr. Selinger), Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) and local MLAs. Many people have stopped us on the street, in restaurants and stores or attended the village office to express their views verbally, asking that I bring their concerns to you today. I ask this committee to reconsider this bill as it currently reads and respectfully request two amendments to the legislation.

The first amendment is to include all residents and property owners as part of the 1,000 population threshold in Bill 33, thereby identifying the unique circumstances of the seasonal community, such as ours, and exempting our village from this legislation altogether.

I am a permanent resident of the village. However, I could have been elected to mayor as a non-permanent or seasonal resident, but if this legislation is passed without amendment, then I would not be counted. There are a number of municipalities in Manitoba that are seasonal communities similar to Dunnottar. While our permanent population may not meet the proposed 1,000 minimum threshold, our summer population grows to between two and four thousand people.

As well, Dunnottar has over 1,800 registered voters. These folks are entitled to vote. They pay both municipal and school taxes and should be included when the effects of a change of this magnitude will impact them. Either positive or negative, there will be a change.

Dunnottar is unique in many other ways, and there are other parameters by which a community ought to be measured to be considered sustainable. We have a healthy property tax base exceeding \$66 million. Of 25 urban districts with a population between one and five thousand, our assessment would place us in the top half on this list.

While there are suggestions that through amalgamation fiscal efficiencies may be obtained, what about good stewards of the land and environmental sustainability? As a means to maximize environmental protection, Dunnottar provides unique septic tank maintenance and hauling practices that include regular pump-outs, which provides the opportunity for ongoing inspection of septic tanks. Residents with leaking septic tanks are required to have them repaired, and in 2008 outhouses and septic fields were decommissioned altogether.

Sustainable development and protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility, one our community takes seriously. Bill 33 starts out stating that adequate populations are needed to provide essential infrastructure and services to their citizens. Residents of the village enjoy weekly garbage and recycling pickup, e-waste and hazardous waste pickup three times per year, innovative waste water treatment, yard waste processed into compost, which is then available to the residents.

We invite you to take a drive to our community. Eight piers are constructed each spring and removed every fall. One of these piers has been featured on the Government of Manitoba's website for a number of months now and has caught the attention of many. In magazines, newspapers, on the radio, these piers

are the pride of our community and draw many visitors each year. There is a great fear they will be lost with an amalgamation.

The concern is that in a larger municipal setting, existing practices will dictate the future, and these services will be eliminated, even with provisions in the existing legislation that allows for services to continue. The Manitoba Municipal Act states that the purpose of a municipality is to provide good government, services, facilities, and other things necessary or desirable and to develop and maintain a safe, viable community. The village believes it meets or exceeds these specs and is of the view that many of these services may be lost in a big municipality.

Where demands for lower taxes may dominate the mandate for an amalgamated council, the document to which government keeps referring, prepared by Rural Development Institute in Brandon, entitled Indicators and Criteria for Strong Rural Municipalities in Manitoba, date April 2013, the Province has used this report in support of amalgamation and suggests a strong municipality includes 3,000 residents and a taxable assessment of \$130 million. The document also discusses and refers to Dunnottar as one of the top 10 healthy municipalities and lists Dunnottar as a candidate for a strong municipality.

*(20:40)

The second amendment that we ask to be considered is not amending The Municipal Act to change the summer election schedule. Traditionally, Dunnottar, the Town of Winnipeg Beach and the RM of Victoria Beach have enjoyed summer elections. With the passage of Bill 33, and without an amendment, our elections will be held at the same time as all other municipal general elections, the first occurring in October 2014.

It is our position that this will provide a disadvantage to both candidates as well as the voters. Candidates will have limited access to elicit support for seasonal residents if seeking positions on council in the weeks to—prior to a fall election. While many of our seasonal residents are in the village for extended periods of time during the summer, beginning in September, visits to the village are shorter and they only occur on weekends.

Although legislation allows for advanced polls and mail-in ballots, voter turnout in Manitoba for the federal, provincial and Winnipeg elections paint a clear picture when compared with voter turnout in

last year's by-election held in Dunnottar. In the last federal election, 59 per cent of eligible voters in Manitoba cast ballots, compared with 56 per cent in the last provincial election. In Winnipeg, 48 per cent of eligible voters came out to vote. And in Dunnottar, July's 2012 by-election, 72 per cent of the eligible voters hit the polls.

And, in closing, I am confident in saying that an overwhelming majority of ratepayers, who identify as being part of Dunnottar, oppose amalgamation. On their behalf, I respectfully request amendments to be made to this bill to include an exemption for communities like Dunnottar as well as maintaining our summer elections.

And thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 33.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Gamble, much appreciated. I appreciate your presentation.

And, certainly, as we mentioned earlier and before, that this government is certainly listening to the people and taking a look at presentations given and sincere comments made with regard to all aspects with regard to Bill 33. So I really appreciate your comments and pointing out the uniqueness of your community. And we appreciate it very much.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Rick, for bringing your presentation here tonight.

And I do sincerely hope the minister is listening. And he has told us all along that he's going to listen, so I hope he really does, and he listens to your concerns. Many concerns have been brought up tonight. We'll hear many more as the hearing continues.

And I just want to thank you for being here tonight and presenting the—Dunnottar's position. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, Rick.

One of the questions I have: The Rural Development Institute report said you were one of the really healthy municipalities, and yet you don't make the \$130 million, and by the criteria of this legislation, you don't make the thousand. So, I mean, why would they put you as one of the most healthy municipalities? There must be—you must be doing something right.

Mr. Gamble: We work very hard to try to do that. That you would have to ask them.

But, I—you know, I think we're well spread out and do different things, and we're—especially on the environmental front, we're—and the, you know, as everyone probably knows, all the concerns with Lake Winnipeg, and we certainly take that seriously and try to do our best to avoid, you know, building on that problem.

Mr. Briese: Yes, thanks for your presentation tonight, Mr. Gamble.

I clearly understand your concern with your summer population and so on, but do you think—this whole piece of legislation has been based on one thing really, the population numbers. Do you think that's fair in any municipality?

Mr. Gamble: I think it should be broader than that, you know, beyond population. There's other things that could come into play. You know, just the—how a pop—how a community is functioning and, you know, their debt load or their administration costs and all that sort of stuff, which we are well below the 20 per cent. I think we come in at 14 per cent. So I think there's a lot of things that should be considered, beyond population.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Gamble: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: Okay, I would now like to call on Reginald Atkinson, reeve of the RM of Cornwallis. Reginald Atkinson, you'll move to the bottom of the list.

Philip Thordarson, RM of Lakeview.

Do you have some materials to hand out?

Mr. Philip Thordarson (Rural Municipality of Lakeview): No.

Madam Chairperson: Then you may begin.

Mr. Thordarson: Thank you.

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you. My name is Philip Thordarson. I am the reeve of the RM of Lakeview, a small municipality on the west side of Lake Manitoba. I'm in my second term as reeve; previously, I was a councillor for 12 years. I've

enjoyed my years in municipal work. There's a great pleasure and pride in working for the betterment of one's community.

I've also enjoyed working with provincial government departments through the years. We appreciate the assistance we received from the provincial planning department in first creating our own development plan and zoning bylaws and then becoming part of the Big Grass Planning District, an action we took along with our neighbours on the advice of the provincial government—co-operate regionally to stave off the threat of forced amalgamation. We are proud of our achievements in this small municipality.

In the 1990s, we installed sewer and water in the Village of Langruth, replacing municipally owned wells which had become contaminated and were unfit for human consumption. A truck loading station was also installed for rural residents. Since then, we have partnered with the Province and the feds to upgrade our water treatment plant with slow sand filtration and ozonation, a state-of-the-art system, highly sustainable. Our next goal is a distribution system for the rural people.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

We have worked hard to make our community a pleasant, attractive place for residents and visitors alike. We have a municipal park with service to RV parking in the Town of Langruth with a playground down the street. We have a well-maintained arena and community hall.

We've had a number of firsts in our region. The RM of Lakeview was the first municipality in our region to bring in 911. A number of years ago, the Childcare Family Access Network was set up in Langruth. CFAN spearheads and oversees a variety of programs, daycares and nurseries in our community and communities around us. There is a resource centre so that toys can be shared between communities. It is operated by a non-profit board with representatives from different communities, three RMs, it's all about rural development. The Childcare Family Access Network was the first of its kind in western Canada.

Here is another first for our municipality. In the early 2000s, the RM of Lakeview, after a long struggle with PFRA and Crown lands, took back our municipal lands in the—from the Lakeview Community Pasture and have since then partnered with the Big Grass grazing co-op, resulting in a

greater financial return to our municipality than we ever received from the federal government, and cheaper rates for the patrons. We were the first municipality in Canada to do so, and now that the federal government is shutting down the Community Pasture Program in western Canada, we have years of experience in the successful operation of a community pasture, while other communities are just now trying to figure out how to proceed.

Located where we are, between the Big Grass Marsh and Lake Manitoba, there are many opportunities for tourism and cottage development. At present, lots are selling and cottages are being built at Big Point on Lake Manitoba and more development is expected in the future.

* (20:50)

The flood of 2011 struck our community with little advance warning and it struck hard. We were flooded from the west and flooded from the east. Many culverts were washed out. We built dikes around farmyards and fought to save the cottages at Big Point. We hauled in limestone and put down geotextile to maintain road access for our citizens. It was truly the most difficult experience we ever endured, but we are proud of what our citizens and what our council accomplished. We had volunteers filling sandbags and others hauling materials, and still others making lunches. And as this went on, we watched the Portage Diversion running more and more water into Lake Manitoba. Our council had put in many extra hours because of the flood, and we are proud of how we stood together.

We got through that difficult time. Things are, for the most part, back to normal. Dead trees have been cleaned up at the beaches, and the dikes have been lowered. Existing cottages and new cottages are being placed on foundations 820 feet above sea level. This is well above the 2011 peak level of the flood. Both the government and opposition parties, we're thankful to say, have recognized the need for an outlet for Lake Manitoba. We should be happy. We should be able to sit back, take a deep breath and relax. But no.

In November of 2012, Minister of Local Government Ron Lemieux declared that municipalities with a population of less than 1,000 people would be required to choose neighbours to amalgamate with to reach the magic population number of 1,000 people by 2014 and said, make no mistake, this will happen. In the following months, much pretense has been made of listening to our

concerns and objections. But the government has remained totally intransigent.

In fact, municipalities have been treated in a very disrespectful manner. The government has called us dysfunctional, unable to complete our PSAB requirements and thus unable to benefit from income sharing. I can personally tell you that in our situation, that is not the case. We know there are large RMs in that situation, but the government doesn't mention that. We are told that we will benefit from amalgamation, and a Brandon study trumpets 3,000 people as an ideal population for a municipality. Where is the proof? What are Ontario's experiences? I've heard of cases there that were not successful.

Let me tell you about the large municipality north of us, population 1,000 plus. During the flood, every day all summer, a semi drove through our community hauling filled sandbags from Winnipeg to that RM, travelling hundreds of miles because they couldn't get anyone to fill bags in their RM. How costly was that? And the big municipality south of us, population 1,000 plus, two weeks after our flood fight had started, a councillor from that RM called me to ask where could he get AquaTubes. I submit to this community—to this committee that our municipality was not at a disadvantage because of our size, but rather, the opposite. We as a council saw and understood the severity of the situation. Our citizens understood. We stood together. The larger municipalities, where the majority was not affected, were not as able to take swift action.

Now I'd like to take a moment to imagine the scenario with different players. Let us suppose the Province was a child of the state. And let us suppose the Government of Canada was to declare small provinces to be dysfunctional and in need of amalgamation, and the Province was told, let us be clear, this will happen. After all, small provinces run deficits. If they were to amalgamate, they could use economy of scale and be more efficient. And let us imagine that Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC chose to amalgamate, and Manitoba was left with Ontario. We could close our Legislature, reduce the number of representatives and fly the remainder to Toronto where they would meet in the 'Ontarioba' Legislature. Let's think of the money we would save. Would we be confident of getting a fair deal in the bigger Legislature? I've heard that northwestern Ontario doesn't feel fairly treated by Toronto and some people would prefer to be part of Manitoba.

Of course, the whole idea is ridiculous. And that is how we feel about the closing of our municipal office. It's a bright, modern office of which we are very proud. We have no interest in firing our CAO and support staff and trooping 30 miles to Gladstone to pay our taxes and deal with municipal concerns. We prefer to deal with our community's affairs in our own community.

I mentioned earlier that small municipalities have been treated in a disrespectful manner by the government. Well, the name of Bill 33, The Municipal Modernization Act, adds further insult to injury. I want to stress to you that we are not a backward people who need to be dragged kicking and screaming into the 21st century. We are a resourceful and, in many cases, very educated people who understand very well the problems and positives of rural life. If we want something done, we'll do it ourselves. We don't want ignorant city folk and their lackeys telling us what to do. Finally, I find it ironic that the government that brought in antibullying legislation is bullying small municipalities and has been doing so for months. It seems hypocritical to me.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you, sir, for your presentation.

Do we have questions from the committee?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, just a comment. Thank you very much for your presentation, and as someone who's lived in rural Manitoba all my life, I appreciate your comments and you taking the effort tonight to be here, to put forward your views and the views of your municipality, so thank you very much for that. *[interjection]*

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: I'll have to recognize you first, sir.

Mr. Thordarson: Yes, I just wondered if I can suggest that perhaps you've been sitting in this Legislature too long to really know what rural people need. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: Thank you, Philip, for coming in tonight.

Philip's one of my constituents and the RM of Lakeview is in my constituency, and I know what you put up with, with the flood in 2011 and some of the longer term effects that are still being felt. I'm going to ask you the same question I've asked a

number of others. Why do you think the government is so set on pushing amalgamations?

Mr. Thordarson: Well, I can only guess. I would feel that it would be possible to put—place more of the costs for services upon our—on a larger municipality. I can only guess that.

Perhaps it is just what I said before, that they just don't—the government just is not in touch with the country people and does not realize how small communities work and how so much of our work is volunteer, you know, and to think of shutting down our small communities with their volunteerism and then expect us to try to put forward one candidate to—one person to represent us in the larger municipality. Now, I feel that we would have a problem even to find people willing to take on that extra challenge because while the job is still not full-time, it's not enough—it's going to take time away from the busy schedule of rural people, and rural people have their own businesses to run. And small municipalities, they're willing to take that little bit of time so I do think that it's a lot to do with wanting to off-load services on us.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, Philip, and I can certainly attest to having been out in your area related to flood-related matters, that you did a remarkable job in your municipality of looking after people. You're an example of a community which is less than a thousand which has done remarkably well. One of the concerns that has come up has been that municipalities like you might not have the financial wherewithal to participate adequately in infrastructure projects. What would you say if that was raised?

Mr. Thordarson: Well, first of all, I would say that we just completed a major upgrade to our water treatment plant, in partnership with the two higher levels of government. So I don't see that as a problem. I mean, our costs for our size of community are not, you know, not huge. We can look after our small community with less money. We have—we certainly have received sharing funds, funds that are shared by the government, and we have made good use of them. And we have a well—we have a balanced budget and reserves and we're not struggling to operate our municipality.

* (21:00)

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

And seeing that there are no more questions, we now call on Mr. Jim Brown, private citizen. We don't have a Mr. Jim Brown? Mr. Brown will be dropped to the bottom of the list for tonight.

We now call on Mr. Richard Heapy, private citizen. Do we have Mr. Heapy? He will likewise be dropped to the bottom of the list.

We now call on Mr. Barry Wowk, councillor, RM of Silver Creek. We don't have Mr. Wowk, and he will likewise be dropped to the bottom of the list for tonight.

How about Karin Boyd? She's here.

Do you have any materials for the committee, ma'am?

Ms. Karin Boyd (Private Citizen): I do. I have a copy of my text.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: You'll be helped. Thank you. And please proceed as soon as you're ready.

Ms. Boyd: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to address the committee.

I am also not just a private citizen, I'm a former seasonal resident of Victoria Beach. I am now a permanent resident and I am also a councillor of the— in the rural municipality of Victoria Beach.

Now, there will be others who will speak after me on—more specifically on the effects of amalgamation and the effects of Bill 33 on our municipality, but I would like to focus my comments on three major issues. While I recognize that amalgamation of municipality has merit in general, and that there are several areas of concern in Manitoba that can be improved by the Province and the municipalities working together in a more cohesive way. However, the process and criteria for achieving this, as prescribed in Bill 33, raises some serious issues for many of the municipalities.

The first of the three I'd like to focus on is that the requirement of amalgamation using only the arbitrary criteria—criterion of a permanent population threshold is rigid and it's indefensible. Surely, all taxpayers, seasonal or permanent, who are expected to accept all the responsibilities and privileges and to meet the fiduciary obligations, as outlined in the laws and regulations of their municipalities, should be treated equally. To ignore seasonal or part-time residents who pay the same taxes as those who are deemed to be permanent constitutes taxation without representation and is, in my opinion, inherently

discriminatory and undemocratic. Households who pay tax should be treated like permanent residents and should be included in the minimum resident count.

My second point resolves around the nature of resort municipalities. In the—in this bill, a—resort municipalities are being ignored. There's a historical precedent to recognize summer resort communities, such as Victoria Beach, Winnipeg Beach and Dunnottar. All see marked seasonal increases in population, well beyond the thousand-population threshold over the summer months. To remove the resort designation, which allows for holding municipal elections in the summer, as opposed to the fall, would further disenfranchise seasonal residents of these three communities. These ratepayers make their homes not just in Winnipeg, but are scattered across the country and abroad and come home in the summer to enjoy their summers in their various resorts. For many, it would be difficult for them to exercise their democratic right to vote in the fall and, therefore, deny—therefore we're denying them the opportunity to participate in their own local municipal governance.

As has been pointed out, campaigning is also—be also becomes difficult for council—for individuals who would like to run for council because the majority of their prospective constituents will be in the municipalities in the summertime, then they leave. How do you campaign? So, in removing the special resort designation, you are really decreasing the possibilities for democratic participation.

A recognition of the unique governance requirements of resort municipality has resulted in 80 years of successful and financial self-sustaining government. Basic democracy requires that the current ratepayers should continue to be allowed that same voice in determining their future form of government.

My third point speaks to the long-term sustainability of municipalities. Victoria Beach, specifically, with a tax assessment base of \$380 million has been financially stable and viable since its inception. The seasonal residents constitute 87 per cent of our tax base, and not accounting them in the basic requirement of population, again, you are ignoring those who pay the bills, really.

The seasonal residents are not transient—they are not the transient population. Many have intergenerational connections, many for five generations, my family included. We are on our fifth

generation, as are those of many of our neighbours. So these are not people who come and disappear. They come back year after year and they support the community.

This stable community has existed for almost a hundred years. It is due to the taxpayers—many of them who have inherited VB property, Victoria Beach properties over generations—that the RM of Victoria Beach has been able to grow and provide improved services; for example, the new water treatment plant, extended police service, better garbage pickup, which is not being offered in our neighbouring municipality.

Far from being unsustainable, Manitobans, former Manitobans, and many others from all other North America, return to Victoria Beach year after year and pay taxes to the municipality no matter where life has taken them. So we cannot ignore our seasonal residents.

In closing, I would ask that Bill 33 be amended to include taxpayers in the count of permanent residents, or of residents in general, and to recognize the unique circumstance of resort municipalities. Thank you.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much for your presentation, and thank you for coming this evening and putting forward your views with regard to the uniqueness of your community, making a very strong argument, obviously, but I certainly appreciate it and that's what the democratic system's all about, where people can put forward their views, and we've said all along that we're certainly—we're listening to the citizens of Manitoba and will continue to do so. So we really appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Karin, for your presentation and coming out tonight and exercising your right to the democratic process. I know that you being not only a permanent resident but also a councillor at the Victoria Beach, no doubt this past 10-11 months—coming close to 11 months, I guess—has put a little bit of a different spin on the whole 'councillor' job. I think the level of anxiety probably has gone up and that I can share with you as well with the amount of emails, increased emails from—and as you mentioned, not only from Victoria Beach but from the city and throughout the province and throughout the country as well. It is amazing how—how broad that goes.

So, do you feel that with this top-down approach, it has hindered this non-process from the government side? Has it hindered your job as a councillor to take care of some of the usuals that you would be doing?

Ms. Boyd: It certainly has back-burnered a lot of our day-to-day operations because it's been the top of our mind. Everyone is concerned. There is—you're right. There is a great deal of anxiety within the community as to what will happen to us, the negative effects—the potential negative effects of being amalgamated with another municipality that we don't really have a lot in common with in the bigger picture.

* (21:10)

So we find that we're not doing—or well, we are doing, but it's a struggle to get the day-to-day activities of the council completed. And, you know, through our—for example, we have a development plan that we are working on, and it's been struggle to get it completed because we've been working on the amalgamation issue, but we're still working on it.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, Karin. One of the arguments put forward for promoting amalgamation has been to ensure that municipalities have the economic base to be able to participate in infrastructure programs. You're clearly well over the Brandon Rural Development Institute criteria for having an adequate economic base. Have you ever had any problems with being able to finance critical infrastructure that you needed?

Ms. Boyd: No we have not. We have just in the last number of years we have built a new store; we have built a state-of-the-art water plant, which has been completely financed by our ratepayers. There has been no government funding to build those projects. Our ratepayers recognize the importance of the infrastructure that we present to them and they are willing to step up to the plate and support that.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

And we now call on the next one, Mr. Tom Farrell. Do we have a Mr. Tom Farrell?

Floor Comment: Yes.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you. Do you have any materials for the committee, sir?

Mr. Tom Farrell (Private Citizen): I have some here; they're my speaking notes.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you. Please proceed as soon as you're ready, sir.

Mr. Farrell: Good. Thank you.

I just want to thank you for the opportunity of getting in here this evening. We kind of got things slightly out of sync here because we had Charles Chappell, our solicitor, who should have been speaking ahead of all of us from Victoria Beach, but shit happens.

It—I just—Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, members of the Legislature, Victoria Beach is a resort community that began over 100 years ago and has been self-sufficient since it's very beginning. And I'm going to follow the points I've outlined here just to give you a sense of why we believe it is unique.

We have restricted motor vehicle traffic in the summer months for many years. This just didn't happen with the building of Highway 59 that came to an end at Victoria Beach. This started many, many years ago, and the purpose was public safety. It was to make it a safe place for children in the summer months. The municipality owns and looks after the large parking lot where people can park for the summer for about what you'd pay for half a day here in the city. Just—and it's operated by a lessee who provides a taxi service.

Municipal elections at Victoria Beach have always been held in July to ensure that all taxpayers have an opportunity to cast their ballot. A move to a common October date will reduce the opportunity for many of our taxpayers to vote. It simply will disenfranchise them. Even if they're interested in voting, having one or two polls somewhere in the city of Winnipeg that they would have to look for to vote regarding Victoria Beach will come second to their need to vote for their own municipal councillors here in the city. And, of course, this can be extended whether they can live in Calgary or Halifax, so it goes right across the country.

We have another unique situation at Victoria Beach that we absolutely must preserve. We think it would be lost if we were folded into some—the neighbouring municipality, and that is our Franco-Manitoban connection. Albert Beach, which is part of Victoria Beach, was actually land acquired by the Archdiocese of St. Boniface in the late '20s, and it was set up to provide cottages or areas for members of the archdiocese to come out. This—it began with that and it was operated by the archdiocese until the end of the Second World War,

at which time they decided that it had to kind of be broadened somewhat, and people were able to acquire their property. And of course, now, it has sold. But we go to some lengths to ensure that we have adequate bilingual signage, and that, in fact, we respect that because I believe it is something in Manitoba we have to continue to be aware of and respect.

The RM of Victoria Beach owns the store, the bakery, the restaurant and the golf course. It's not because we don't like anybody or we think we're the best people around, but we'd never get that service on our own. Our ratepayers have paid for that, the building of a new store, the maintenance of the things that we have here, to ensure that they have that service. That store operates through the two summer months. It opens on—for the weekend, starting the May long weekend, and goes right through 'til Thanksgiving weekend, at which time it closes. Same thing with the bakeshop. The golf course will close probably at the end of 'Decem'—or at the end of September, but that—yes, the end of December—it will be closed. But that is done for the benefit and use of people who live at Victoria Beach or who come there to play golf.

We have our own police force, fire department and first responders. Again, the police service we operate was put in place many, many years ago. At one point in time, an RCMP constable was assigned there. As things changed going back into the late '50s, the cost of having an RCMP contract grew significantly, and they went to their own service. We have sensed, with the changes in the police act, that we have been able to acquire policemen who work for us during the summer, who are trained policemen, meeting the criteria established by the Attorney General, which is trained by the RCMP, City of Winnipeg Police Service or Brandon/Assiniboine Community College training. Those are the people who work for us. We have, this past summer, had six people, one of whom is our chief and our permanent policeman. He's a retired City of Winnipeg officer, Stewart MacPherson.

Our council supports the summer community club and the year-round sports club, as well as the East Beaches Senior Scene and the services it provides to seniors and other community services. We recently constructed a water treatment plant with no assistance from the Province or the federal government. The plant operates from the Victoria Day weekend to Thanksgiving, providing purified water that we take from a well that is about

400 metres offshore in Lake Winnipeg. Some of you may have read an article that—where Dr. Eva Pip suggested that a dog was defecating in our water supply. It would be a very good dog that could find his way out to that well. But that is what we operate. It is above-ground services, so that we do shut down in the—those of us like myself who are permanent residents rely on wells.

We have garbage pickup. We provide that to the cottages throughout the summer, as well as the permanent residents, on a weekly basis. And this pays us a dividend. It keeps our big, black friends, who like to come in and visit, away. The bears don't find much to eat there, and we don't have a significant problem with bears. And it ensures that the refuse is properly looked after and out to the landfill site.

We have just gone into a contract where we're into phase 3 with Baird coastal engineers on a study related to our shoreline. This will provide a plan that 'wi'—to preserve our beaches. And I would just like to say, we owe a debt of thanks to the Honourable Christine Melnick, who was Minister of Water Stewardship, who provided us with \$100,000 as we were going through the problems related to the weather bomb of 2010. I was just looking at Greg here; he came out with the dough.

* (21:20)

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

It—Baird engineering and we're—we will share that information with Conservation as we get it, because what is being done by Baird, they're probably a very—they—they're a niche engineering company. They started in, sometime in the late '80s out of Ottawa, and they're working all over the world on coastal work. And we're pleased with what they've given us, what they're—have told us to do is not cheap and we will be planning to do something with it but we won't be able to do it all.

But we will be sharing that information because the government of Manitoba may well want to look at some of the information we've gleaned from the studies around lake—Victoria Beach and the sampling of sand to apply it to other parts of the province.

Madam Chairperson: You have one minute.

Mr. Farrell: I have one minute, well, I'm just—I just, well, that is something that we are doing. We've been doing all this on our own. We will continue to do it on our own.

As my predecessor and council member Miss Boyd indicated, we have a very significant assessment. We do have a significant tax base. We can function independently, and we have been functioning independently. We would hope that this Legislature can resolve this problem for us, and we can get on with doing what we're supposed to be doing, which is looking after Victoria Beach.

I want to thank you all for the opportunity to express my opinion to you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Farrell. Thanks, Tom, very much for your presentation and also the—that person who presented before you.

Victoria Beach is a unique situation and we've taken a look at this, and we're certainly contemplating on bringing amendments forward with regard to Victoria Beach. We're—the department is looking closely at what amendments to bring forward and certainly how to word those.

And I just want to, I guess, ask you a question as to the uniqueness of yourself or Dunnottar and other communities. If you had to put, you know, one comment on the record—sorry, excuse me—if you had to put one comment on the record with regard to the uniqueness of your community and to make an argument why the government should look at amendment, what would that be? I mean, what would that be to present to this committee?

Mr. Farrell: Thank you. Victoria Beach is an interesting blend of permanent families and summer residents who've worked together for close to 100 years. My wife is a descendant of—that's how I got to Victoria Beach, through marriage—she's a descendant of one of the first families to homestead there and they were the Ateahs. How the—a Lebanese couple got there is beyond me, but they were. They worked with and provided service to the cottagers. That relationship of permanent residents and cottagers has gone on for many years and will go on. I think that's a key to why it is a community.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Thanks, Tom, for coming out and presenting that the—expressing the uniqueness of Victoria Beach, and I'm familiar with that.

Just a question: The media was reporting that the minister was musing about possible changes. Has the

minister been contacting your municipality other than through tonight? *[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Farrell.

Mr. Farrell: I'm sorry. I spoke to the minister last week, actually, and he didn't give me any guarantees of what would happen, but we did speak about this—the particular issues that are—that have been troubling us.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks, Tom, for coming out and giving your presentation and the personal stories to a lot of the permanent residents and seasonal residents also that share your views of the wonderful place, Victoria Beach. It is interesting that your—the study in regards to Baird and the—your shoreline, that you're willing to do some consulting with the Province and share some of those findings of that study and actually come together as a group and, again, share those findings with the Province so that maybe someone else or other communities in the province can take those ideas and move forward and protect their shorelines as well. So I commend you for that.

It's also great to hear today, as the minister I know is suffering from a little bit of a cold, that he's saying that he's willing to start to look at some of the amendments. And I know that my colleague, Mr. Pedersen, had asked you the question about when was the time that you had a chance to chat with the minister and you said, about a week ago because part of my question was going to be, Tom, you know, for many, many months I've been asking in question period and actually, since the Throne Speech, the minister kept saying on how he was going around the province, out and about, and conversing and collaborating with municipalities, reeves, mayors and councillors. And I'd asked him on more than one occasion when he had a chance to actually have that meeting with Victoria Beach and actually you giving the answer to Mr. Pedersen's the first answer I received. So I thank you for that.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, just to put it on the record, what is your, sort of, total population in the summer and what's your winter population and if you had to, sort of, compare to a population which was year-round, I mean, would you take the total summer population or would you, sort of, take half the summer population or what would you do to make it equivalent? *[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Farrell.

Mr. Farrell: I'm sorry, Mrs.—Madam Chair.

The—that is an interesting one because we, first of all, StatsCan information was never that good but of late it's really not worth the powder to blow it to you-know-where. It—so using that probably isn't even a good number for the permanent population. But I would take—we have 2,600 people who are on our voters list who are non-resident. There—and it's only two per cottage, so, in fact, I would take that as a number of people who really are—they're taxpayers. They're probably better taxpayers than I am because they're paying taxes in their—the community that they list as their residence and they're paying the full shot with no break on school tax in our community. So I would take that number as being a solid number. So that's where we're at.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Our time for questions has expired. Thank you very much for your presentation.

I'd now like to call on Brent Fortune, reeve, RM of Blanchard. Brent Fortune. He'll go to the bottom of the list.

Robert Campbell, private citizen. Do you have materials to distribute? Then you may begin.

Mr. Robert Campbell (Private Citizen): Thank you for your attention tonight. I would first like to thank all those who've worked before us to set in place rules of order and good governance that we enjoy today.

My name is Bob Campbell and I live in the village of Dunnottar. Our mayor, Rick Gamble, has already spoken tonight, raising many good arguments for why Dunnottar should be exempt from forced amalgamation. I'm also one of the four elected councillors in the village but I'm not speaking today in any official capacity. I appear here today to speak to Bill 33 and offer my opinion as to how it should be amended, so it can be legislation that all Manitobans can benefit from now and into the future.

First and foremost, the amalgamation process should not be forced upon any municipalities. The Province should rely on the force of sound rationale and specific arguments to promote the reductions in the number of municipalities envisioned by the bill, as it currently stands. If, for reasons I am unaware of, such a straightforward amendment is impractical, I would then suggest a different

amendment. Please consider amending the criteria for which municipalities are made subject to this bill.

* (21:30)

As we are all aware, the bill, as written, uses only one parameter to divide all the various types of municipalities into two categories: one group subject to amalgamation, the other not. These—those municipalities which could be urban or rural or cottage country or have some aspects of all three characteristics having a reported permanent population below 1,000 must amalgamate to form new municipalities above the 1,000 permanent population threshold.

The Village of Dunnottar and the municipality of Victoria Beach have demonstrated, in their particular special case, the Statistics Canada census of permanent residents as reported in the 2011 census does not adequately describe how many residents actually reside in our municipalities. In our special case, we hope for and ask for an exemption from Bill 33 based on this argument, even though for the purposes of the Village of Dunnottar, we feel the total number of citizens who take part in our community is much larger than 1,000. I do not believe reliance on this one parameter to determine municipal amalgamations is good practice.

In the Brandon University Rural Development Institute report entitled indicators and criteria for strong municipalities in Manitoba, the second sentence of the opening executive summary reads: Due to the complexity of rural Manitoba and municipalities, no single measure can identify what constitutes a strong rural municipality.

Anyone with an interest in municipal government in Manitoba probably knows of the Mayor of Gladstone Eileen Clarke and respects her dedication to her town. In my experience, small towns and municipalities provide opportunities for entry-level jobs for elected officials, municipal administration and public works staff. These people become the resource from which larger towns recruit experienced CAOs and town foremen. Politicians such as Ms. Clarke put themselves forward in regional governance after gaining practical experience and become tomorrow's leaders.

In our modern times, we are constantly reminded to become involved in our communities, and with some thoughtful amendments to Bill 33 perhaps that can be nurtured while also encouraging any sensible amalgamations.

Thank you for your consideration in these important matters.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, thank you very much for your comments this evening, and I know your—Mr. Gamble, the mayor-reeve of Dunnottar, made some very, very good comments as well and I appreciate it, and appreciate your taking the time, quite frankly, to come out and speak to this committee. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Bob, for coming out and speaking tonight and representing your community and your community's interests.

I believe it was you who had an op ed in the Free Press three weeks ago, and I really enjoyed reading that, and it was—you spoke your mind and that's what this country is all about is being able to have freedom of speech.

Thank you for tonight.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, thank you for coming out and talking about—with a lot of pride—your community.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much.

I would now call on Ray Franzmann, deputy reeve, RM of Grey. Do you have some materials to distribute?

Mr. Ray Franzmann (Rural Municipality of Grey): No.

Madam Chairperson: You may begin.

Mr. Franzmann: Thank you, Madam Chairperson, legislative representatives.

A lot has changed in the RM of Grey in the last couple of months. The reeve has to step aside and I was elected reeve at the end of July. Prior to that, I was the councillor and deputy reeve.

I represent here tonight the RM of Grey of approximately 2,000 people. Within the boundaries in the RM of Grey, the incorporated Village of St. Claude resides with a population just under 600. Under the proposed legislative Bill 33, St. Claude will have to amalgamate with the municipality.

After the November announcement—November 2012—the RM of Grey met with the council of St. Claude in March 2013 with only half of the St. Claude council present. I can say there was very little

enthusiasm to go through with this process. At our next regular municipal meeting, we passed a resolution not supporting amalgamation, based on the existing legislation, which is voluntary.

St. Claude left the RM in the early '60s and are officially a bilingual municipality, whereas the RM of Grey is not. Bilingual status is important to them, and I can't say that is the case with the RM. And nobody wants to wade into that debate.

The RM council was not willing to engage in this amalgamation process as long as the legislation was voluntary, as it has been 'til now. The municipality is governed by The Municipal Act and all—at all, and we believe it is inappropriate for the minister to order us to engage in this process outside what the act requires. In having to review and update municipal council code of ethics and then to be basically ordered to engage in the minister's wishes outside of the act, in my opinion, is not acceptable. It's September, and to have a plan, whatever that is, by December 1st, is just unreasonable and ridiculous, when this bill passes.

Earlier this year, the Province provided a seminar and proposal. It was indicated that we are not to expect much support from the Province and not to expect cost savings from the amalgamation. Ten hours of consultant time on behalf of the Province is a joke. We've been assigned the CAO of the town of—RM of La Broquerie. Probably takes him four hours to do the round trip, and that doesn't leave much in the day. So we—we're not very happy with this, and we don't see this as being very useful. There's no information available for the costs of this process, as we were required to include these in our yearly budgets, approved by the Municipal Board. The Province is not going to cover these costs. The RM and St. Claude do not have the employees with the experience, knowledge and time to work on these matters. So it is not unreasonable to assume a lot of the work will be done by consultants at huge costs.

When I was sworn in as reeve at the end of July, one of the first things our assistant CAO asked me was what her job life expectancy was going to be with amalgamation. And I tried to assure her, because she had six years of experience and that the town of St. Claude, their people had—the most experience was six months and was never a CAO until theirs quit, that I didn't see a problem with her having employment with the—in the amalgamation. She resigned. Her last day was last Thursday. She has gone back into the legal secretary part of the

world. So, I—we really—we're already feeling the effects of this—of the concerns of this amalgamation.

Over my last seven years on council, the Province has done its best to impoverish local municipalities. The Province may claim municipalities need to reduce costs, and by being more efficient, an expectation of amalgamation. But the truth is the Province is as big a contributor to increases in—of our costs of operation.

You have introduced an insurance tax, PSAB accounting—\$60,000 start-up, \$20,000 a year for the extra audit, financial audit. We have an 8 per cent PST now is non-refundable. We have a \$10-a-tonne garbage tax, on top of recycling programs that will never pay for themselves. We have a tire tax. We have a water drainage licensing and related surveying costs, and the surveying costs to do any type of drainage, municipal drainage, are fairly expensive. We have CD funding in—Conservation District funding increases, reductions of provincial contributions. We have reduction of funding for rural water line installations, thus raising municipal costs and adding years for project or area completions. We have removal of funding for local vet clinics. We have non-replacement of bridges over provincial drains—two to come, one done already; costs of new or rerouted access for ratepayers and public, a municipal cost, not provincial.

* (21:40)

These examples of initiatives or downloads by the Province—good, bad, or indifferent—contribute to the lack of infrastructure funding and thus higher mill rates placed on our ratepayers for this demand. As a previous councillor, now reeve, I don't feel that I have been as effective as I need to be due to the lack of funding for infrastructure. The Province has been as much or more a liability rather than an asset in the operation of this municipality. And now we will have the costs of amalgamation, and the money for that, the ratepayers' higher mill for the—and the money for that, the ratepayers' higher mill rates, and the councils will get the blame for the Province's handiwork.

I am to understand that once the plan has been introduced we have to have a public hearing. Do you really think I want to sit at the front of a table and take the heat for a bill been introduced by this Province? I'm not looking too forward to it, but I will be quick to lay the blame where the blame is to be laid.

With this new Bill 33 I call the bullying act, the bullying bill, I believe it will be very difficult to get both councils to the table and be motivated to move the process forward when the will is limited. With virtually no support in this process, I do not expect any plan of substance to be submitted to the Province by December 1st.

To me, it was a very easy process for the Province to create and pass Bill 33. It doesn't take much effort on the Province's part to force amalgamation with unreasonable timelines. It's another for municipalities to deal with this fallout with no support. It's also another thing for the minister to personify those municipalities who don't agree with this bill as insolent children.

Well, that's what you get, I guess, when you come and turn a municipality's world upside down, rush out without support. If I was to personify the government, I would call them a deadbeat dad, and don't expect an apology; you're not going to get it. I believe this is a poorly thought-out bill, nothing you haven't heard, and the Selinger government has done more to harm municipal government relations with this matter than anything I can remember in recent history.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you, Mr. Franzmann, for your comments, and thank you for coming out this evening and taking the time. It's late in the evening, but we appreciate you participating in the democratic process in speaking to the elected officials of the province. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Ray, and congratulations, I think, on your election as reeve. You mentioned that there is cultural issues, French language issues, concerns in terms of what St. Claude has with the RM of Grey and vice versa. Are there are other concerns as well between—on both sides, both the town of St. Claude and the RM of Grey?

Mr. Franzmann: The town made it very clear that the cultural issue was front and centre, and in our research—in my research is that, unlike the school division, we can't have one block of bilingual within the municipality, so either the whole municipality is or it isn't. To them it's very important.

To us, we see a huge infrastructure deficit in the town of St. Claude. And, yes, it would be viable for them to come to the RM of Grey, but we're not

looking forward to having to blend in their eight or nine mills higher than the rural municipality. Plus we also have issues with the fact that I know the previous reeve, Tkachyk, had asked the minister at one of the meetings whether it would be able to roll the town of St. Claude into LUD as we have two LUDs already, and he said he would take it under advisement. Well, if it's part of the act already, and you meet the criteria, I don't know how you—why you would say that you should take it under advisement. Should be able to do it. If we can put them into an LUD, that would solve some of our issues, but not all of them.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Maybe you could speak a little more to the unique problems of amalgamating a bilingual and a non-bilingual municipality.

Mr. Franzman: We're told that the costs of converting—changing—putting bylaws and whatever into both official languages is not a cost necessarily that the municipality will bear; it's provided by either the federal or provincial government. But what costs there will be is that our administration, there'll be huge changes there. Our CEO is—none of our front people are—experienced people are bilingual. Whether they stay with us or move on, it's a good question.

So I consider any of those changes, those are real costs that we'll have to come up with. We do have, in our municipality, a fair number of French-speaking people working in the public works department, and so we get by in that way.

Mr. Briese: Thanks for your presentation, Mr. Franzman. Do you see any salvage for this bill, or should it be a bill that's just folded and look at possibly amalgamations going forward in four years' time and giving municipalities time to make those decisions?

Mr. Franzman: I really—it's been my opinion that we need more time. And I have told a lot of the—I've had lots of ratepayers question me on this, not in support of this at all. But I say, if anything, I would like to see a 2018 deadline of having it in place by then as being acceptable. I think we can work with that. I think it helps us to take the experience of other municipal amalgamations to help us in this process because the information that—we have no information in this process. And only by watching what others have done—and, hopefully, they're successful at it—we cannot make the mistakes that they're making, if

they're making any. And we can't afford to make mistakes in this process. And whatever they may be, I want to have it done; I want to have it done right. And to rush in and have a plan in place in December, have it wrapped and done by January 2015, it ain't going to happen, and I don't know what you intend to do to us if we're not compliant.

So I just—I would just as soon see the 2018 deadline and move forward on it.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

I would now call on Tom Mowbray, reeve of the RM of Roblin. Tom Mowbray? Okay.

David Sutherland—and his name will be dropped to the bottom of the list. Thank you. David Sutherland, private citizen. He will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

An Honourable Member: He's here.

Madam Chairperson: Oh, I'm sorry. I assumed you were putting your jacket on to leave. Sorry.

Do you have some materials to distribute?

Mr. David Sutherland (Private Citizen): No, I do not.

Madam Chairperson: You may begin.

Mr. Sutherland: I'm David Sutherland from Landmark, Manitoba, which is in the municipality of Taché, which has been a municipality as long as most of these guys been hanging on the wall around here. My provincial riding is Dawson Trail, the same as Mr. Lemieux's. I had 10 years on the LUD committee of the Landmark LUD, eight years chairing that committee. I am very active in local politics, and I'm well travelled with my business. It takes me throughout northern Ontario, all Manitoba and parts of Saskatchewan. I meet businessmen and their employees. I have friends in almost every community that I go to. There isn't a community that I can go to that I couldn't find a place to spend the night if I was stuck.

We talk a lot of politics because political—I have very political interests. I also have a very deep interest in local histories. That being said, I have to wonder about the logic, not the rhetoric, behind Bill 33. It affects small, overwhelmingly Tory-held municipal districts, and that in itself merits questioning. Is the real reason to have less Tory heads at the table during meetings with the

government over municipal issues? Because the given rationale is ill conceived at best. Savings due to economy of scale, what a wonderful idea when applied to the manufacturing industry. The reality is, is when applied to people it often loses its benefits rapidly. The cost savings, due to the elimination and duplications of services, are quickly lost due to increased claims for compensation due to increased areas of responsibility. The disconnect distance from the taxpayer to service provider increases. Now that may seem a little bit foreign to you, but being on the LUD, I have had to get out from my barbecue on a Sunday and go help out somebody who showed up at my door.

* (21:50)

This is what these smaller municipalities do. This is not the City of Winnipeg. I grew up in Winnipeg. Things are significantly done different. This is not the village of Lorette, even, for that matter because that's a bedroom community; a bedroom community is not the same as some of these rural communities. These rural communities have a great focal point and a great pride amongst the people who live there, who created these municipalities in the first place. Not the government. The government made it official, but it was the people from those communities that created those communities.

The new built-in excuse for poor services management, by blaming increased workload, physical areas of service, differences between urban and rural service levels, will result. Take the easy way out. If you don't feel like doing something, you can take the easy way out. This makes it much more convenient. Why is it so hard to get a back-lane pothole filled in Winnipeg? I think every person that's been up here will tell you approximately, it would be under a week if it was in their municipality, because if somebody shows up at your door and says I got a real big problem, you take care of it. That is how things are done differently. I grew up in the city of St. Vital. When incorporation with the City of Winnipeg occurred, St. Vital lost its identity. The level of services decreased.

Where is the economies of scale here? With more of the tax monies going out to meet the needs of the city as a whole, this eroded civic pride. Hasn't bothered me. I continue to give things to the St. Vital museum because I grew up in St. Vital, I have a certain amount of connection and pride to that. Civic pride is often the developer of these communities.

Turtle Mountain and Killarney have been rolled out as a poster child for this bill; however, these two entities have a history of working together and volunteering to join as one. That is significantly different than trying to beat municipalities over the head with a stick. Bill 18 is brought up a few times. Gee, I wonder why. Because this is bullying. This is not any sort of time frame whatsoever for this kind of step. To encourage this kind of step, yes, I can understand that, and in some places it makes sense. And I trust the people who run these municipalities to do the right thing. But this government, it doesn't.

Regional health authorities. How's the economy of scale going with that? I think we know the answer to that one real quick, don't we? This has been done in Ontario. Believe me, I know Ontario very well. I was supposed to be there today. And anyone who asks you, this is the right thing to do, have not talked to the area residents. Nestor Falls is withering while the new government spendings blesses Sioux Narrows—one entity. Barclay, Ontario, is paying four times as much tax as Oxdrift, Ontario, with equal-service levels. I've researched this clearly with people that I know. Both are an equal distance, both east and west of Dryden, Ontario. The difference is Barclay's was forcefully incorporated into Dryden. McKenzie Island, Ontario, with no services provided by Red Lake, Ontario, pays exactly the same tax rates. Now it's easy to say, well, gee, you can go and vote people out and straighten this out. It doesn't work that way. McKenzie Island is a very small community unto itself; Red Lake is a big community. How do you vote majority and say this is wrong? You're just hoping that they magnanimously say, yes, no, that's wrong, we'll take care of it. It doesn't work that way. The only thing that happened here was the population numbers were fluffed up and benefits flowed to the chosen town.

I conclude that the cost-savings argument is a very hollow one. This government, in my opinion, has never met a tax dollar it didn't want to spend. The multiple emergency excuses used for the illegal implementation of the PST, as well as the tax-wasting record of this government, tells me that this is purely a political move by a government about to lose power, and in order to damage the opposition this is one way of getting back with them. Well, shame on you. This is not your plaything.

Near Wawanesa, Manitoba, we have the Criddle/Vane Homestead provincial park; the history of this pioneering family is recounted many times over the area most affected by Bill 33. The work that

these homesteaders and descendants have put in to make this province what it is must be acknowledged, free labour. To make municipal roads, free labour. I hope you heard that. They also donated land for parks. They donated land for schools. This is what they gave, and now, Mr. Lemieux, you're saying you, as the minister, they can just say take a hike. Well maybe they should reclaim their goods. I don't think so.

Many of these areas never had large populations, but they survived. Has this government been in power so long that it thinks it knows better than the people it refers to as howling coyotes and insolent children? Well, I've got news for you, the people of this province do not need a babysitter to tell them right from wrong. If your idea has merit, the people will favour it; if not, the people will reject it. And, if it is rejected, there is only two possible conclusions: one, it's a bad idea, or two, it was a really poor sales job.

Next year's the municipal election. I would suggest it would be good time to hold a referendum on the matter because there's plenty of time to try and sell the idea. Bill 33 is not required as the provisions to 'amalgamate' are clearly covered under the current Municipal Act and you would not have to further waste our valuable time.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Sutherland; thank you, Dave, for presenting. We appreciate your comments. It's this kind of democratic process that we're fortunate to have in this country and have in this province, and so we appreciate your comments. We may differ on a few of your comments, but it is an open and democratic society and we really appreciate you presenting to the members here. Thank you.

Mr. Sutherland: Just a comment. If you are open to democracy, well, then, the people who created this municipality have the right to choose.

Mr. Graydon: And thank for you for your presentation tonight, Mr. Sutherland. I really appreciate the passion that you have for a community that you have adopted as your home.

These communities, as you pointed out, were built by people that had family values, that wanted to see the community grow. They donated to the community, and the community of Landmark has

seen some ups and downs with businesses there, but they've certainly been very resilient. And I know by being out there this year to their parade day that the people there were very, very proud, a very proud people of their community, very family oriented. And I know that the LUD and the job that you do there are very, very public service oriented. And, when you get into larger, larger area, like you have suggested, in a city, you don't have that same type of service; it's just not there. You're far removed from the people that have voted.

I'm just going to ask then: Do you think that municipalities or LUDs deserve some of the same respect that Victoria Beach has got—it's got a nod from the minister that he will do something for them—or is it just because a large portion of Victoria Beach population is Winnipeg based? Do you suppose that's the reason to give them some type of hope that there's going to be some change? And, when I say hope, I have a real problem believing anything that this government says after the last election when they promised not to raise taxes and not to raise the PST.

* (22:00)

Mr. Sutherland: It is very difficult to paint anything but a barn one colour. By attempting to take Victoria Beach and Dunnottar as—and treat them exactly the same way as everywhere else is not fair because of the whole way they're made up, even with the LUDs.

When we came up with this new Municipal Act back in, I believe, '86, '88—can't remember when it came in—there was many things that were pulled back from the LUDs, and I fought against that, too, because the LUDs, we are closest to the people who are paying the taxes. And we must never, ever lose sight that people are paying taxes. For what? Services. That's what they're paying taxes for. They're not paying taxes for shiny—nice shiny ribbon-cutting ceremonies. They want something real and tangible. And, when you're down at that level, you're dealing with services that may not be pretty—sewer, it's water, but it is needed—and that's what they're paying taxes for. As an elected official, one must never forget that.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you. I've been through Landmark quite a number of times, but just to help me understand a little bit, what's being proposed is that Landmark would amalgamate with the RM of Taché, is that correct? And what specifically in terms of, for Landmark, I think, we would see a loss of

identity, to tell us a little bit more about that—the problems.

Mr. Sutherland: I'm afraid, Mr. Gerrard, you're a little mistaken. Landmark is not affected by this bill whatsoever. Neither is the RM of Taché. We have 9,000 people in the RM of Taché. We have approximately 1,300 people in Landmark. We're a bedroom community. I'm here for the other communities which I have worked with some of the community people before. I travelled very extensively, as I said. I have a lot of friends in a lot of communities. And I thoroughly understand that their situation cannot be compared to anything if you are living the city or living in a bedroom community. It cannot be. They are the only focal point that the people in that area have to wrap around and say it's us. When I go down to the States and—we have some relatives down there—they're proud of the counties they live in down there, and and they will have friendly competitions. It helps the community as a whole.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Our time for questions has expired. Thank you for your presentation.

I'd now like to call Holly Krysko, private citizen.

Do you have some material to distribute—thank you. You may begin.

Ms. Holly Krysko (Private Citizen): Hello, my name is Holly Krysko, and I am the chief administrative officer of the Rural Municipality of Lakeview, which will no longer exist after amalgamation. I quote Minister Lemieux's statement at our June district meeting: Is amalgamation going to happen? You're damn right it is.

I am grateful for today's opportunity to let this government know that I am only one of many small rural voices that are damn mad at the way this bill is being pushed through. This seems to be a done deal, but I hope you are listening and will consider the views of someone who does the real day-to-day work as directed by my council to ensure our small municipality operates effectively.

I'm extremely proud to be part of the most amazing community that is governed by the finest and best municipal council. The small town of Langruth and the surrounding farming community of Lakeview are fiercely proud of its heritage and history.

Lakeview has run successfully for almost a hundred years, and we are challenged to thrive in today's changing times, as do all small rural communities. As our amalgamation options, either Alonsa or Westbourne, are much larger in size than Lakeview, amalgamation will be the end, as Lakeview is swallowed up by the larger community. The Province's amalgamation promise of greater economic development will not be the future of Lakeview residents. The voices and representation of Lakeview's residents and economic development would be lost to the larger amalgamated municipality.

If amalgamation is going to destroy our small rural community, and 96 others, what are the reasons for doing so? What research and investigation and municipal input led the Province to this decision, and how was the community—and how was this communicated to those affected? When the Province first announced amalgamation at the AMM convention, it was a shock for municipal leaders and employees. At that time, one of the reasons given was small municipalities had not been able to complete their PSAB-compliant financial statements in order to access gas tax funding. I thought certainly this could not be the reason to put an end to small municipalities, and surely an accountant or two could work with the municipalities to get these completed. I heard later it was not just small municipalities; it was also the larger municipalities such as Brandon. I was certain the Province researched this reason and reviewed the number of small compared to large, but in the Hansard when Blaine Pedersen asked the question of how the numbers to 'lar'—small to large compared, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) didn't have an answer. It seems the Province hasn't done the research, has done a sloppy job or simply doesn't feel the need to provide reasons. If PSAB-compliant financial statements were such a concern, perhaps the Province could've provided more training and resources necessary to move municipalities into PSAB compliance.

Another reason given for amalgamation was better ability to attract more qualified staff. Let me assure you that Lakeview has very qualified staff. I previously worked in two other municipal offices and was a chief administrative officer in another municipality before Lakeview. I have a commerce degree plus years of employment experience, both at the federal and provincial governments. The small municipality of Lakeview was able to attract me as a qualified CAO; plus I am in awe of the dedication,

knowledge and quality of all of the employees in Lakeview.

The Province has ignored the impact amalgamation will have on municipal employees. There has been no recognition that almost half of the municipal employees will lose their jobs. There are 97 CEOs, 97 assistants, 97 public work foremen and the list goes on and on. These are the folks with many years of dedicated service to their local communities. Actually, amalgamation will result in better ability to attract qualified staff because it will create a large pool of unemployed municipal workers to choose from. Over two and a half years ago, I moved to Lakeview for a job as CAO. I want to stay in the house I purchased and in the community and job that I love.

When Lakeview amalgamates, we will most likely do so with the Town of Gladstone and the RM of Westbourne. These two larger municipalities have their own expert staff. The CAOs and assistants will not be giving up their positions to me. One of my Lakeview councillors said, I am sorry to say, Holly, you will be losing your job. Although there have been no formal discussions, it is pretty clear that the smallest municipality, which I am part of, will lose to the more populated and more powerful. The Province has failed to recognize the power differential reality of forced amalgamations and its effect on the people.

Another reason given for amalgamations was efficiency. Having worked for all three levels of government, I can assure you that municipal governments are the most efficient. But efficiency does not depend on one factor, such as population size; efficiency is complex and developed over time with any interrelated factors that are continuously changing and difficult to measure. The previous municipality that I was a CEO of had a population of greater than 1,000 and it was most definitely not more efficient than Lakeview. I would argue that a smaller municipality is closer to the people and more efficient than a larger, more populated municipality.

Having worked in municipal government for many years, there are certainly things that we need to do to be better and more efficient. There is much opportunity to work with other municipalities and the Province to improve in numerous areas. There currently exists a need for more information sharing, expertise and modern procedures while at the same time understanding unique local circumstances. Not addressing this need and forcing municipalities

together will make current problems larger and create additional problems that prevent the growth and efficiency that amalgamation was to create.

Not only are the reasons for amalgamation weak or unclear, the Province did not involve the municipalities. Manitoban municipal leaders, the AMM, the MMMA, and those knowledgeable folks that work in municipal field were not consulted. I recall clearly in university learning the basis of how to manage change. In order to successfully implement change, those affected need to first clearly understand the whys or the benefits and then, secondly, be involved in that change, be able to buy into it and be part of it. If you tell people rather than include people, you will not be successful. When the Province did not involve municipalities in this monumental change and have forced it on them by legislation, the outcome will surely be disastrous.

What is particularly troublesome to me is the Province's rhetoric of how they are listening to municipalities. Municipalities were shocked when this amalgamation was first announced. Over the following months the minister received numerous letters from affected municipalities strongly opposing amalgamation for many reasons. At public meetings, Minister Lemieux listened to objection after objection from municipal leaders. Listening involves having an open mind and considering other views, experience and knowledge, and then responding and explaining, debating and coming to understanding on both sides. We wanted to be heard, we wanted to be consulted and we wanted to work with the Province on the issue of amalgamation.

* (22:10)

Minister Lemieux stated that municipal boundaries established over a century ago no longer reflect the larger regions where people live, work and do business. This municipal modernization bill is not modern at all. It uses the same old boundaries, only forces smaller municipalities together into larger and thus reduces the number of municipalities. Not only is amalgamation not researched with sound reasoning, to suggest that it is modern, that is somehow advanced in theory or takes advantage of up-to-date technologies or uses innovative ideas, is laughable. Forcing together old boundaries is the easy way out because it's quick and it's simple.

I ask the question without expectation of an answer, why can't Lakeview extend north and south along Lake Manitoba, taking over parts of the larger RMs of Alonsa, Westbourne and Portage la Prairie?

Lakeview could continue to exist and become larger. Consider that Lakeview's unique character and future economic possibilities may be better developed along Lake Manitoba than with our currently restrictive amalgamation options. Why not truly be modern and look into real change in municipal boundaries that develop all of Manitoba, including the small rural municipalities?

Madam Chairperson: You have one minute.

Ms. Krysko: Because this amalgamation bill lacks clear and strong reasons with little research and no municipal input, it has broken our trust. Municipalities feel bullied and disrespected by the provincial government and doubt this legislation is in our best interests and would benefit rural Manitoba. If the Province had been open and honest and transparent early on, and communicated and involved municipalities, we would've trusted and worked with the Province. Municipalities also want what is most efficient, economic development, reduced costs, skilled staff, but we do not trust this forced amalgamation bill and its unrealistic timelines. This bill needs a do-over.

If amalgamation is going to work, the Province must do more research, study the amalgamation experience in other provinces, work with municipalities, involve them in the process, ensure that the reasons for amalgamation are strong and well-communicated. Really listen to municipal concerns and address them, discuss them and concentrate on those municipalities who want to amalgamate. Provide resources and assistance that will allow best practices and successes for others to follow.

In order for Manitoba to move into the future in a positive way, provincial legislation must show care and respect for Manitoba's rural—small rural councillors and municipal employees that have spent years of devoted service to their communities. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you, Ms. Krysko, for your presentation, and we appreciate it. And as Manitoba is one of the only provinces in Canada, I've been advised, that have committee hearings with regard to the legislation—no other province has this particular system, so we do appreciate you coming out and taking the time to present your views. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Briese: Yes, thank you, Holly, for your presentation tonight. I appreciate you coming in and presenting at this committee. And it was a very, very well-put-together presentation that I hope the minister is going to pull out the Hansard in a couple of days and read it all over again just to see what all the good points were you put in it.

I'm very familiar with your municipality, as you well know, and I may say this a little bit tongue-in-cheek, but it appears at this late date, the minister has just realized that there's francophone communities that are a little bit different. He's also realized that there's resort communities that are a little bit different, and maybe with your location along Lake Manitoba, you can fall into that resort community lineup and lobby that way to the minister.

But, overall, you know, we've heard condescending types of comments coming from the minister throughout this debate on this bill, and one of them that really irritates me in the House is when he suggests that all the municipalities that are opposed to this bill are back in horse-and-buggy days. And, you know, that's just inappropriate and not needed at all.

The question, I guess, I would ask you is, do you think there's any chance at all they can meet the timelines they got in the bill at this late date?

Ms. Krysko: I don't think so. I don't know how we're going to have the time to do that and do the day-to-day work. It's just not realistic.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, Holly. I think your concept of having a municipality which follows the edge of the lake is a very interesting one. How realistic is that? The concept would be that you've got an area where there's a lot of common interest, and you provided an example—or I think we got it from Philip—that Lakeview was better prepared for the flood and knew what was happening along the lake quicker. Tell us a little bit more why that's a good idea.

Ms. Krysko: I don't know if it's the best idea, it's just that we need to look at this—look at other ideas. Just shoving together old boundaries—those larger RMs, they have the larger population; maybe we could scoop up some of them and be viable. Like, to me, those old boundaries, it's not modern to push them together. Let's look at something else. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no other questions, thank you for your presentation.

I'd now like to call on Phyllis Thordarson, private citizen. Do you have materials to distribute?

Ms. Phyllis Thordarson (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

Madam Chairperson: Please begin.

Ms. Thordarson: Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Phyllis Thordarson, and I have lived in the small Rural Municipality of Lakeview for the past 30 years. I have worn many hats during my time there: I was a United Church minister for over 20 years, I have chaired the court of Portage presbytery, served as an elected school trustee in the Pine Creek School Division, worked as an active community volunteer, and I am presently a term supply pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Langruth.

I have experienced both rural and city living, as before I resided in the country, I lived in the North End of Winnipeg and the inner city of Halifax. I am familiar with city politics, as I was brought up in a social-justice environment fighting for the rights of the poor and the disenfranchised in the inner city.

I stand before you today to state for the record that rural living is a totally different reality than that of city living, and that the same policies and practices that work in the highly populated cities simply do not work in rural areas. I say this in regard to Bill 33, the forced amalgamation of rural municipalities. Bigger does not mean better in a rural situation.

Let us take a reality check as to what actually happens when the policy, bigger is better, let's amalgamate, happens in small rural communities.

Having chaired a church court and having been a minister of a three-point pastoral charge, I watched what happened when a smaller church was closed and people were expected to drive to a larger community to go to church; it didn't work. A few would go and the larger church would get a slight increase in their congregation. The drive was too far and too expensive for too many. So they were left with nothing, to the detriment of that community.

Having been an elected representative and a school trustee on the Pine Creek school board, I got a reality check when I realized the bigger communities did not treat our smaller communities fairly;

inequality abounded. Our elementary school was the only one that didn't have a teacher trained in a specialized reading program to help kids read. It was suggested by the other trustees that the elementary students could travel another 30 miles on the bus to Gladstone and then be picked up by their parents at noon if they wanted the program. It soon became apparent that some of the trustees from the larger communities wanted to close down our small school so that they could increase their own enrolment. They wouldn't mind getting our tax dollars, our students and taking away our school.

* (22:20)

When I was no longer trustee, the Pine Creek school board decided to close our school. As a community, we argued that the information they had was wrong. As a community, we organized and insisted that Indian status cards be used for ID for kindergarten and other students who didn't have birth certificates or baptismal certificates. We actually had to take registration forms to parents and deliver them back to the school to make sure the school division had the proper enrolment figures before their budget meeting. No other school in the division had to do this. Word of mouth and estimates were enough. There was no equal treatment for us. Our small community went en masse to the school board meeting—parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and neighbours to present the true and accurate information. We were right. The school division's information was wrong. Our small school remains.

Today I stand before you stating that some of your assumptions that bigger is better and the amalgamation will be better for all municipalities, especially many small, rural municipalities, are erroneous. Rural living is not the same as city living. I stand to state that Bill 33 will in fact take away the freedom to decide our future, decrease democratic representation, inflict injustice and inequality, prevent sustainability, cause the loss of jobs and, in some cases, undo economic hardship on members of the community. It will not be efficient but rather cause a demise of our smaller communities. Bill 33 is forced amalgamation. Forced means we are coerced to do this. This is not a grassroots movements saying, we want amalgamation. This is a top-down decision made by the NDP government to force us to amalgamate and limit our say in our future.

I must say, I am surprised that the NDP party would do this. I was brought up in a social-activist

environment and I was brought up to believe that the NDP party was for the little guy, the man on the street and for rural development.

I think Tommy Douglas would roll over in his grave regarding Bill 33. This contravenes the preamble to the NDP constitution which states, New Democrats believe in freedom and democracy and in a positive role for democratically elected and accountable parliaments, Legislatures and the governments responsible to them. Coercion is not freedom. Forced amalgamation will reduce the RM of Lakeview's democratic representation from five elected officials to only one if we are forced to amalgamate with the RM of Westbourne and the Town of Gladstone. Freedom and democracy? I think not.

Manitoba NDP, if you force this amalgamation and loss of representation, you are in my eyes and, yes, in the eyes of many others, NDP no more. Your 213 preamble also states, New Democrats are Canadians who believe we can be a better one, a country of greater equality, justice and opportunity. We can build sustainable prosperity and a society that shares its benefits more fairly. We can look after our seniors. We can offer better futures for our children. We can do our part to save the world's environment. New Democrats work together to these ends for the sake of our fellow citizens and in the interest of all humanity.

Bill 33 will inflict injustice and inequality on our small community. If we have only one elected representative, we will always be in a minority. That means the bigger center will always be able to make decisions to its advantage.

In my experience as a minister and as a school trustee, I don't believe human nature has changed, and I believe that the bigger centre will look out for itself and we will lose our municipal office, lose our local municipal jobs, and I, as an individual, will have to travel an 80-mile round trip to do any business at the new office further away. It is an injustice to force us to lose our autonomy and our identity and force us into an unequal relationship.

Bill 33 contravenes equality, justice and opportunity that the NDP professes. Manitoba NDP, are you NDP no more?

Madam Chairperson: You have one minute remaining.

Ms. Thordarson: Right now the RM of Lakeview is, as are all municipalities, required to have a

balanced budget. We take care of our own needs quite well. We have a local initiatives group that wants a future for our community and our families. Being part of a larger RM will not make us more sustainable but less able to control our own sustainability. We will not get the same services, but they will get our taxes. What happened to sustainable prosperity? NDP, what are you doing? Are you NDP no more?

And for some people, travelling a round trip of 60 to 80 miles to their new municipal office to do their business will be an economic hardship. Amalgamation doesn't work for our small rural municipality. Our system isn't broken. Why are you trying to change it to the detriment of our community?

Having lived in both the city and the country, I believe that the information you have been given, that forced amalgamation will better our small rural municipalities and communities, in fact, is erroneous. It ignores the fact that rural living is a different reality than city living.

The decision to make—you make on this matter is, in fact, an ethical one. By supporting Bill 33, I believe you are supporting to take away the freedom to decide our future, to decrease democratic representation, to inflict injustice and inequality, to prevent sustainability, to cause the loss of jobs and, in some cases, undue economic hardship on members of our small rural community of Lakeview and many other small municipalities.

Madam Chairperson: I'm sorry, I have to interrupt. *[interjection]*

Is there leave of the committee to allow the speaker to finish her speech? *[Agreed]* You may continue.

Ms. Thordarson: One more paragraph.

Is this what you, as a ruling NDP political party, want to do? Because if it is, then you no longer practise the word stated in the preamble to the NDP constitution and will be, in fact, acting to the detriment of small rural municipalities. Are you willing to do this? I ask you: Are you NDP, or are you NDP no more?

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much for coming this evening and having your democratic say. We

appreciate it very much, to all the legislators here, and we thank you for taking the time.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Phyllis, for your presentation, very passionate and very eloquent. I hope that the minister not only listens to this, I hope the minister takes it to heart so that he will change what he is—the route that he has been going with this bill. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: I do want to thank you, Phyllis, for coming in and making a presentation tonight. It was a compelling, well-thought-out presentation and I do appreciate it. And, as the member for Midland just said, I hope the minister will pay attention to the presentations that are being made here tonight and do what's best with this bill, and I think we all know what's best with this bill. So thank you very much for coming.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thanks so much, Phyllis. You've got a very attractive area along the shore of Lake Manitoba. What I would ask you—it was a suggestion from Holly that one might consider a municipality which extended along Lake Manitoba. Is that a viable option, or should Lakeview stay just exactly what it is now? *[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: Ms. Thor—excuse me. I have to introduce you. Ms. Thordarson.

Ms. Thordarson: Yes, sorry. Lakeview municipality is a viable option right now. It does not need to expand. It is self-sustainable.

* (22:30)

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

I would now call Alvin Zimmer, reeve of Shellmouth-Boulton. Alvin Zimmer? He will drop to the bottom of the list.

Bruce Morrison, private citizen. Bruce Morrison? He will drop to the bottom of the list.

Gary Williams, mayor of Village of Waskada. No? Okay, to the bottom of the list.

Colin Bjarnason, mayor, Riverton. Colin Bjarnason?

Cindy Marzoff, private citizen. Cindy? Bottom of the list.

Stan Herechuk, private citizen. Stan Herechuk? To the bottom of the list.

Roy Ziprick, private citizen. Roy Ziprick? To the bottom of the list.

Neil Christoffersen, RM of North Norfolk. Also to the bottom of the list.

Randy Lints, reeve, RM of Hamiota. Randy Lints? No? Thank you.

Melvin Klassen, mayor, Town of Altona—*[interjection]* Thank you.

Do you have some material? Our staff will distribute that, thank you. And you may begin.

Mr. Melvin Klassen (Town of Altona): My name is Mel Klassen, mayor of Town of Altona. And just coming here and seeing Cliff Graydon wear a tie is worth the trip, I must say.

The Town of Altona is not here to challenge the right of the provincial government to redraw the municipal boundaries within the province. But we do have a concern about the proviso under policing which states, if two or more municipalities have different police forces, they amalgamate—existing police forces will be allowed to continue to operate in the new municipality for a three-year transitional period. After the three years, the new municipality must decide which police service will service the municipality. If the municipality does not decide, policing services will be provided by the RCMP.

We have, over the course of the last several years, asked ourselves a question as to how we best serve our municipal constituents. We understand that our citizens expect us to effectively and responsibly provide services that are essential to their well-being. These services include a good water supply, waste depot—disposal system, police and fire protection, hospital and medical services and a well-maintained streets and drainage systems. In providing these 'sys'—services, it is expected that we will show fiscal responsibility. Before the present government introduces legislation regarding modernization of municipalities, we had already had informal discussions as to whether amalgamation with our neighbouring RM, the RM of Rhineland, would be in the best interests of both constituencies.

Both of our municipalities seek to be efficient and fiscally responsible in providing these services to our residents. These discussions have, over the years, not proceeded to amalgamations, but they have produced a variety of partnerships. We used to

have a motocross track within the town of Altona. After some consultation with the RM, we jointly purchased some property approximately one mile outside of the town and allowed the motocross group the rights to manage this property. We are told by the motocross group that presently the track has the potential to be one of the best in the province.

Several years ago, we felt that for us to improve the medical services within the area, we needed to have control of the medical clinic in town. Without much argument, we partnered with three neighbouring municipalities, the RM of Rhineland, the Town of Gretna and the municipality of Montcalm, and today we have a modern clinic that can accommodate seven doctors and will serve our medical needs well into the future. We share a landfill with two other municipalities, Gretna and the RM of Rhineland. We jointly manage our volunteer fire department and an airport with the RM of Rhineland. And within the last five years, we've also signed an agreement with the RM of Rhineland allowing them to dump—the dumping privileges at our lagoon.

And on a more regional scale, we are 'partening' with several jurisdictions in providing library services to our communities. We were also one of the first communities that sought to partner with several communities to establish the Pembina Valley Water Co-op that presently provides potable water to 10-plus municipalities.

This last year we 'recevren'—we received an award from the provincial planning and research department for the collaborative approach we used in establishing our planning district, the RPGA. The planning district consists of the RM of Rhineland, the towns of Plum Coulee, Gretna and Altona.

I'm mentioning these partnerships so that you can appreciate the many partnerships that are being formed so as to give residents in our region the services that are vital to its continued growth and yet showing how co-operation with others make it fiscally affordable. That successful collaborative approach that Altona has been involved in in past helped us when Plum Coulee came to us in 2008 and asked us whether we would consider signing an agreement with them to provide police services for their town. The latest census had allowed them to make a choice as to whether they wanted to maintain the services of the RCMP or whether they wanted to initiate their own police force. We agreed to sign a nine-month agreement on a trial basis. Both

communities knew that this was new to the Manitoba scene, and if it didn't work as a win-win, then we would appreciate the effort and go our separate ways.

We were in consultation with the Manitoba Justice Department, and they were very supportive and helpful in guiding us through the steps as we formulated this agreement. The first agreement was signed for a nine-month period, and in March of 2009 the first three-year agreement was signed. According to their mayor, and you heard him before, Mr. Archie Heinrichs, the residents of Plum Coulee were and are still very appreciative of the agreement. Some reflections of the residents of the town of Plum Coulee as listed in the June 13th, 2013, Red River Valley Echo state: the residents praised the policing efforts of the police force; they appreciated the presence and approachability; the police have made presentation in their seniors centre and the schools and made their presence very visible.

They have no interest in going back to the RCMP policing this community. And, personally, as a graduate of their high school, the Plum Coulee collegiate department, I can attest to the fact that Plum Coulee is a proud, thriving and focused prairie town. The residents are progressive and compassionate about their future and are committed to working in a regional way to—and to accommodate their needs. And over the past number of years, we have also appreciated the support that we have received from the Justice Department and especially the present minister, the Honourable Andrew Swan. In our communications with the department, we have always felt that they understood that though we are smaller entity, we still have challenges which need a strong police presence. And we felt the same type of support when Plum Coulee asked us to service the town with our police force. We collaborated with the Justice Department and came out with our present agreement.

This agreement between Plum Coulee and the Town of Altona was the first such agreement in Manitoba. At its signing, it was hailed as a milestone and a great way to provide policing in some of the smaller communities. The signing was recognized with an award by the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. And during the police board hearings several years ago, the then-minister of Justice, the Honourable Dave Chomiak, asked me whether this contract would've been negotiated had there been a police board in effect. I replied in the negative, and during that brief discussion he seemed to be quite positive and complimentary and endorsed this

method of providing police services to smaller communities.

Amalgamation now creates a problem. Should the Town of Plum Coulee and the RM of Rhineland amalgamate, this contractual agreement will in all probability come to an end. As I mentioned at the outset, under the policing proviso as laid out in the bill, if two or more municipalities that have different police forces amalgamate, existing police forces will be allowed to continue to operate in the new municipality for a three-year transitional period. After three years, the new municipality must decide which police service will serve the municipality. If the municipality does not decide, policing services will be provided by the RCMP. Now, how does this affect Altona?

Altona and the Town of Plum Coulee have spent countless hours and considerable funds in developing this contract, a contract that has the Altona police providing high visibility police services in both communities. The Altona police are scheduled to be in the Plum Coulee community office twice a week, are on-call 24-7. This agreement is exactly what I feel the honourable Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) wants to see happen. He wants more co-operation of services so that the citizens of the communities within the municipalities can best be served within a fiscally responsible framework.

The new RM of Rhineland, should amalgamation occur, will in all probability not choose to provide local policing for its entire municipality, unless it receives the portion of police funding that urban centres receive for policing. And as you are well aware, if a town has a population of 750, they may provide their own policing. They receive a provincial capital grant of approximately \$80,000 to provide the service. And if a town reaches a population of 1,000, it is best practice, according to Manitoba policing standards, that they go to two police officers, one officer for every 500 residents, unless they use the services of the RCMP.

* (22:40)

That will add quite an additional cost for the policing to the Town of Plum Coulee, approximately \$130,000 per officer. That does not include vehicles, office space or clerical help. For Altona, it's a loss of the contract at \$110,000 a year plus the cost-effective efficiencies that we've developed and built into our police budget.

We have a contract that works well for both communities, that's cost-effective and a necessity for both communities. Plum Coulee is telling us that they want to continue the contractual arrangement that we have negotiated with them. For Plum Coulee, this contract is both more efficient, allows for more police visibility and is more fiscally responsible. For Altona, this contract allows us to maintain the efficiencies that we developed in our police budget and yet allows us to continue with the excellent services that we can provide to both communities.

At an Association of Manitoba Municipalities district meeting in Pilot Mound, where Local Government representatives were present, we were assured unequivocally that policing arrangements would not be touched in amalgamations.

Madam Chairperson: You have one minute remaining.

Mr. Klassen: Okay. It would be a seamless transition.

We're asking that the considered legislation presently before you allow municipalities that can prove that they're efficient and effective provide police services within their present boundaries be allowed to do so. Please work with us and allow this to happen.

If during that transitional period both municipalities agree that the contracted agreement is working well and they can show that they're fiscally responsible and following the wishes of the constituents, why would you force it to be aborted?

Plum Coulee wants a choice as to which police service policies our—polices our community. We can and are providing this service at a benefit to both the Plum Coulee and Altona communities. Allow us the opportunity to continue a service that both communities see as efficient, visible and fiscally responsible. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you, Mayor Klassen. You've always been a strong leader for your community and very well respected, and again tonight we appreciate your comments and sincere comments with regard to the issues around your community, and we thank you for your opinion tonight to all of us. Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: Thanks for your presentation tonight, Melvin. I know that you've waited very patiently and you've got a little over an hour's drive to get back

home, and I suppose you did misplace your tie tonight as well.

But you've made a very strong point that this bill, this proposed 30–Bill 33, has not been thought out at all, that the consequences of the bill—time and time and time again tonight, each presenter has presented parts of the bill that are going to cost more money. It's not going to save any money.

And it's certainly going to have a big impact on the policing in Altona. And I have to say that the police force in Altona is well respected, they are visible in all of the communities all of the time, as was pointed out by someone from Plum Coulee tonight that after the Plum Fest was over or the shift was over for that particular officer, he went home, he changed and came back. He's part of the community, and that's so very, very important in our small communities, that the police service—they're visible. They're visible to the young people. They sit around and enjoy the young people after their duty is done. That's what makes our small communities so, so safe and so family-oriented.

So thanks very much for bringing up that part of the issue that the bill fails to address going forward, and thanks again for the great presentation, Melvin.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Klassen: Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: I will now call on Tom Teichroeb, private citizen. Tom Teichroeb? He'll move to the bottom of the list.

Next we have Bill Ashton, director of the Rural Development Institute, Brandon University. Bill Ashton? No, to the bottom of the list.

I'd like to call on Denis Carter, Rural Municipality of Woodworth. Denis Carter? Move to the bottom of the list.

Stuart Olmstead, Town of Carberry. Stuart will go to the bottom of the list.

Ron Pratt, private citizen. Also to the bottom of the list.

Tirzah Ateah, private citizen. Tirzah? To the bottom of the list.

Don Forfar, reeve of RM of St. Andrews. Not here? Okay, to the bottom of the list.

Robert Sharpe, RM of Saskatchewan? No? Bottom of the list.

Kevin Ateah, private citizen. Do you have some materials to distribute?

Mr. Kevin Ateah (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

Madam Chairperson: Then you may begin.

Mr. Ateah: Ladies and gentlemen, I appreciate the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Kevin Ateah. My family have lived in Victoria Beach for over 100 years. In that time, my family and other pioneer families have worked hard to contribute to our paradise, Victoria Beach. I served as a council member with the RM of Victoria Beach for four terms, 15 years. I've operated my businesses serving Victoria Beach for the past 30 years.

Your government's criteria of all municipalities needing a minimum of 1,000 permanent residents to be viable is, in this case, completely wrong. Victoria Beach has for years offered its ratepayers above average services: garbage and brush pick up, fire and police services, probably the best recycling program in the province and at a lower mill rate than the RM of Alexander—the RM it is suggested we amalgamate with, who offers little to none of these same services.

My big concern though is the damage a forced amalgamation would cause on such a unique community as Victoria Beach. All the numbers have been talked about—400 permanent, 2,600 seasonal, but the reality is we all pay taxes. We have run an 'explarmy' municipality government for the last 80 years. We have no desire to amalgamate with a much larger municipality with little to nothing in common with us, to lose our services, representation and all else that makes Victoria Beach the special place it is.

The statute granted Victoria Beach in April of 1933 to control and restrict its vehicle traffic during summer months has led to possibly the safest summer environment there is. Imagine coming to your summer getaway and being able to send your 5- and 7-year-old to the store, bakery or any of the many activities Victoria Beach offers its community and feeling completely confident in their safety. Quite a concept, and to many, it's priceless. This provincial statute was granted to the RM of Victoria Beach, not the RM of Alexander. No amount of promises by whatever at any given time will convince me that this wouldn't change.

The RM of Victoria Beach has set aside large parcels of land as public reserve, which include many acres of very valuable lakefront. We never wish to have this developed and over time have

turned down lucrative offers from developers to sell. We cannot lose our ability to control this.

One of the sections in Bill 33 speaks to or refers to sense of community. Victoria Beach is, in the area, the centre of community. People retiring or moving to surrounding beaches such as Hillside, Bélair, Traverse Bay, Albert Beach, don't go to St. George, the centre of the RM of Alexander, they come to Victoria Beach for golf, tennis, curling, the senior scene; this is their sense of community, it is the hub of the area.

I, among others in our community, was raised with a sense of duty, or possibly best described a responsibility of stewardship to our beautiful, special and unique home, Victoria Beach. I feel I am speaking for earlier generations when I ask you to allow the RM of Victoria Beach to continue to govern its own affairs, to continue to protect what we all worked so hard for. Without this, we are risking one of Manitoba's true treasures.

Thank you for this opportunity.

*(22:50)

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you, Mr. Ateah. We appreciate your comments tonight and expressing your views with regard to the uniqueness of Victoria Beach. Also, others have expressed the uniqueness of Dunnottar as well.

If you had to put one point on the table tonight with regard to the elected officials here, what would that be to convince members here that special consideration for Victoria Beach should be given?

Mr. Ateah: Well, I guess one thing I would just have to say, it truly is a gem of this province. It's a special place. Tom had spoken earlier of permanent and summer residents working together for the past hundred years, and that's very, very true. We work for a common goal, and that's Victoria Beach.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks, Kevin, for sticking around here for so many hours to be called up to speak, and thank you very much for the presentation, very heartfelt, and it can't—I mean, a lifelong resident of the area, I mean, you can't—can't take it away from you. Very, very well-put. I know that Tracey and the boys and myself went for a walk to the bakery and to the store this past summer, and it was just—it's different—it's a different feeling going there, and you

hit the nail on the head with the safety factor. You could just sort of, just let them go and there's just no worries. It's good. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

Now I'd like to call on Jeff McConnell, mayor of Virden.

Madam Chairperson: Jeff McConnell? No? To the bottom of the list.

Linda McMillan, private citizen. Is Linda McMillan here this evening? No? Bottom of the list.

Joannie Halas, private citizen. Do you have some material to distribute?

Ms. Joannie Halas (Private Citizen): I don't think you'd like it. You wouldn't read it.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. You may begin.

Ms. Halas: Thank you, and thank you very much for this opportunity to present my personal case regarding amendments to the bill. And I also want to thank all of the presenters who've gone before me. It's a very interesting process in regarding democracy that I appreciate. I've never participated in this process in the past, and so I welcome the opportunity to listen to people from other residences, and I'm wondering now, when I retire, I thought it would be where I live in the village of Dunnottar, but I'm compelled to go across the lake to Victoria Beach. But, having said that, Plum Coulee or Lakeside or Gladstone or all of these other municipalities, and if I've learned one thing from tonight, it's we have a lot to be proud of in our province in terms of the public service that so many of the people who have presented here tonight. I thank them all for their public service, and I think, you know, there's much to appreciate in our province.

And I have to say that, over the summertime, I spent a month travelling on a bicycle on the east coast, in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, PEI, and parts of Québec, and when you're on a bicycle for 10 to 12 hours a day, you cycle through a lot of little towns, and you come to appreciate the towns psychologically because when it's a larger municipality it takes longer to get from one end to the other, and when it's a smaller municipality, you have a feeling that you're accomplishing more as you go through each of the towns.

But the one thing I've learned through travelling in the east coast is that as you go through one

municipality after another, they can be very different, and some look really healthy and viable. Others, you go through and you wonder what's happened between the beginning sign and the end sign.

And, so, when I use that as an analogy for the amalgamation process, and when I listen to the arguments put forward by individual communities today, it makes me recognize that certainly I believe that, within the bill, there are compelling reasons for why municipalities would do better amalgamated, and there are compelling reasons for why municipalities do better on their own. And I recognize that in—I don't know much about the governance of a province or a small municipality, although I'm learning more about that because my partner, Bob Campbell, is a councillor, so I've learnt more about what it takes for a small community to thrive. I've also learnt that it's a thankless job to be an elected official, which I'm sure all of you have experienced at one time or another. And I guess what I would like to say is, with regard to the bill, having listened to the various presentations today and having thought about this myself, the amendments I would like to bring forward just as a public citizen.

I will begin with my own community and the fact that I'm encouraged that the type of resident will be expanded to go, may be expanded or will be considered to consider all ratepayers within the village as well as summer residents who are contributors and full-time residents, and I encourage that consideration as an amendment. And I know, I have heard from some of the other municipalities that they may have compelling arguments that their official population may also go over the threshold of 1,000, and I would encourage that to be a consideration within the bill, that if there are compelling arguments for why a particular community can reach that threshold of 1,000, that that argument could be considered duly in the amendment.

I also believe that it would be worthwhile to amend the bill to allow municipalities with compelling arguments regarding their unique circumstances and their viability, that this also be given due consideration so that they could potentially—they could present their case for a potential case for exemption from the bill. I think, based on some of the arguments I'm listening to tonight, I think that could contribute to a stronger Manitoba overall. And I don't know too much about the political processes from one side of the House to the other in terms of, you know, how bills are

amended or how things go forward, but I think taking a strength's perspective in wanting the best for our province and the best for strong municipalities, I would hope that the bill can consider other amendments that would strengthen the overall legislation.

And as a final comment, I would also recommend that if it's possible to have an amendment to the timelines for those municipalities who will be proceeding with amalgamation, that they be given due consideration to make it a manageable process going through the amalgamation.

And I thank you all for your time and consideration, and I just want to say it was a gift to me that my father, years ago, who—he had an opportunity to get a place in the village of Dunnottar in Whytefold, and it was a—it's a gift in terms of, you know, what—it's been asked, what makes a community like Victoria Beach or Dunnottar or these communities unique? And part of it is, I think, that in our urban lives people move from one neighbourhood to another and they lose that contact with their neighbours, and over generations, you know, it's hard to get know each other. But in the summertime communities you often see, from one generation to the next, there's a passing on of traditions and family culture and community culture such as we talked about our public piers. We have a tradition of meeting on the public pier and you get to know each other's kids sitting at the end of the dock. And over years and years and years—you know, I have a friend whose mom is in her 80s; she's one of my last touchstones to my own family, with my own mom passed on now. And so part of the small municipality, I think that we all cherish, is that there is that generational continuity that we get to know each other and our families, and I think anything that we can do through the legislation to strengthen that would be a real—would be great.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Ms. Halas: And there you go. I wasn't—sorry, I thought I'd be on tomorrow night and I'd have time tonight to think about what to say, so I appreciate your time.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much, Ms. Halas. For someone that's never presented before like this, you've done a great job being able to, without speaking notes as such and being able to present your views on what you think about this particular bill

but, in general, about the state of Manitoba and that's really appreciated.

* (23:00)

And I just want to say that Manitoba is unique in Canada. Any legislation, being able to present as a citizen, any citizen in Manitoba, to sign up and be able to present on a bill, to either suggest amendments or to be able to criticize or expand the bill or to be able to give compliments about it whatever position one takes, it's one's democratic right in this province to speak to every bill in legislation. So, we are unique in Manitoba in that sense; no other province does this. Governments pass their bills in legislation; they've been elected to do so. But, in Manitoba, you have the right to present before bills like this and legislation, so I'm pleased that this bill has come to committee and allowing Manitobans to have their say here. So, congratulations, you did a very good job tonight, and I appreciate your comments sincerely. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Joannie, for presenting tonight, and, like the minister said, off-the-cuff. That's the passionate ones. That's—they're always the interesting ones because you speak from the heart.

Two things, if I may. Summing up rural life, it's something that we cherish—being from rural Manitoba, we cherish very much, is that ability to know your neighbour and to be able to let the kids run a little bit loose without having to worry about what's around corner, and you summed that up very well. And the other thing I might add is, while you were bicycling across the east coast, we spent a very enjoyable summer in the Legislature here, and I just—you know, to each his own, but we had an enjoyable summer too. So thank you very much for coming tonight.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Ms. Halas: Did I hear that some of you missed your cottages, as well, while you were at the Legislature?

An Honourable Member: That's a possibility.

An Honourable Member: Some did.

An Honourable Member: Servants of the people.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

I would now call on George Thompson, private citizen. George Thompson? Not here? The bottom of the list.

Lorna Keene, private citizen. Not here as well—to the bottom of the list.

Jim Pringle, private citizen. Do you have some material to share with us?

Mr. Jim Pringle (Private Citizen): No, I don't, sorry.

Madam Chairperson: Then please commence.

Mr. Pringle: Thank you. Just, first of all, I'd like to say thank you very much to the committee for listening to all these people this evening. And I would first of all like to distance myself quite a lot from this whole bullying concept. I find it very reprehensible that people somehow compare this bill and the way that it's being presented to the concept of bullying. This is belittling the victims who are actually experiencing bullying, and to suggest that somehow this is in comparison, to me, is just something that we should not be considering.

Now, that being said, it does seem to me that the way that this bill has been presented over the last few months has certainly been wanting. The criteria is questionable. This a thousand people is a problem, the overall what is the budget of the municipality is also a problem, and I think that these things are definitely have to be considered.

Myself, I am a member of the village of Dunnottar. Some of us like to say Dunnottar as if we're Scottish, you know. You know, I just want to point out a little—give you a little bit of an idea about what it like—it's like to move into a village. Some people think that a village somehow is just a certain number of people. But to us, the village has that other concept to it of knowing your neighbour and somehow being manageable.

And so, for myself, we bought this hovel about eight years ago, moved in, shared it with a family of skunks for quite a while—took us a long time to capture those skunks and drive them over a couple of bodies of water in order to get rid of them, without hurting them, also. And, at the same time, my partner and I spent a whole summer every weekend under the cottage as we installed plumbing and did all of these other things that were required, because we knew when we bought the place that we were going to have to dig a well, put in a holding tank, and do all these other things that were being required of the village. We accepted that, even though we gladly went along with the previous system where we could go get our water from the well down at the corner,

use that water, drink that water, use it to—in all the other ways that you have to, you know.

Now, this is a very committed group of people. Of course, not Revenue Canada, but Canada Statistics says that there are 696 people. Well, I know that there are now 702, and this is what makes us a community as well, because we know these things and, at the same time, we are very committed and voice our opinions at the drop of a hat. So, recently, you may have known about this. It was in the news quite often. We had a spirited debate about whether or not to have a sewer system as opposed to what we still currently have. This engaged summertime people as well as the full-time residents to the point where signs went up one way or the other. There was—occasionally people got a little over-excited, but everybody voted on what proposal to do with the point of view in mind about what was best for the lake. And I think that that's one of the things that really makes the village of Dunnottar unique is that everything that it does is in relation to the health of the lake.

So, when it comes to garbage collection, how to deal with waste water, how to deal with recycling, whether or not to truck waste or pump it, all of these things are being considered in relation to the health of the lake. And once my partner and I finished raising the cottage, putting in the plumbing and the electrical work and all that, and now we moved in a year ago. We now live there, and I don't think we're particularly unique in this regard, that people are considering this.

Now, Dunnottar, with its 702 or whatever it might be, is never going to reach the thousand mark. Even though its proximity to Winnipeg is attractive, its tax charges are attractive, but one of the things that—a consideration as to whether or not what kind of sewer system to have, some people were opposed to the sewer system because they thought it might mean condos were going to be developed. People did not want that. We like small. And I think that's the problem with this legislation. First of all, it may be a miscalculation because Winnipeg is roughly 70 per cent of the province's population. I don't think that's ever going to change. Winnipeg is big enough that it generates its own wealth, its own employment, and all the rest of that. The other centres are never going to, you know, even reach 35, 40 per cent; it's not going to happen. And so I think we have to consider that this—there's going to be a thin group of people outside of Winnipeg throughout the whole province, and we have to keep that in mind. People

like to be able to have some control over their living circumstances, and that's particularly the case, I think, outside of Winnipeg.

Now, the Village of Dunnottar has working relationships with St. Andrews and it even offers support to the province itself in looking after the waste that's generated by the provincial RV park that's right next door to Winnipeg Beach.

*(23:10)

It, you know, has—the only time, to my knowledge, at any rate, where there began to be a problem between St. Andrews and the village was just recently, because the village felt that it had to scramble and find some way of being able to maintain its existence, and so it made this proposable about annexing a certain portion of St. Andrews. Well, St. Andrews was not happy about that. It's—but I think—my understanding is that, you know, things have been smoothed over. It's all working out now.

One of the things that I appreciate is that you can—I have to pay St. Andrews municipality so that I can use the library in Selkirk. This is the only thing that I know of that—now, the thing is I can go to the mayor right now and I can say, you know, this is a problem, why doesn't the village work out an arrangement with the St. Andrews municipality so that we can have free access to the library? But I can do that. I won't be approaching Mayor Katz about this. I mean, I'd never get in the door—

Madam Chairperson: I'm sorry, you have one minute.

Mr. Pringle: So all I'm trying to get across here is that, first of all, I think that we have to accept that rural Manitoba is going to—is made up of a lot of very proud people, hard-working people. To force amalgamation is a mistake. It was of strategic error, I think. And—no, maybe there's efficiencies, but I don't see them, and nobody's demonstrated to me that there's—these efficiencies exist. Let's accept that there's smaller communities outside of Winnipeg that are self-functioning, balancing their budgets.

And I would also like to make a point that—okay, somebody has said that there's been a problem in accessing federal government funds, provincial government funds. Well—

Madam Chairperson: I'm sorry, your time has expired. Can you sum up your comments?

Mr. Pringle: Yes. These regulations that are put in place by such things as Building Canada federal

programs, I swear, they're there just so that the money is never spent.

And so I would just like to reiterate that the Village of Dunnottar—I don't think that by making an exception for those three communities undermines what may be the push for amalgamation.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much for staying so late and thank you very much for giving a very good presentation. We appreciate it as legislators and appreciate listening to your views, and just to say thank you on behalf of my colleagues—well, all MLAs that are here tonight. Thank you for staying so late. Drive safely. Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for your presentation tonight. I liked the presentation, that you didn't write it up, you—it came from the heart with a passion, and you told your story of how you started with a hovel and now you have a home, and it's part of your community. You're part of a community there that is sustainable in your mind, and that's important. That's how these communities continue to grow. So thanks very much for coming in and sharing that with us. I really appreciate it.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

I'd now like to call Kerry—is it Knudson or Knudson—private citizen. Which is it, Knudson?

Mr. Kerry Knudson (Private Citizen): Any way. The end is near; I'm—think I'm the last one unless all these other people are getting pushed back or coming back.

Thank you for this opportunity. Couple of points. First of all—first thing I'd like to say about the whole process is that it—the—Bill 33 is undemocratic the way it's been presented. Everybody just has to fall into amalgamation and that's it. The second thing is the 1,000 cut-off point is artificial. There are a lot of other things that should go into considering communities for amalgamation other than whether they have a thousand people. In my case, I'm from Ponemah, which is—I guess you could say it's one of—it's an amalgamated community of three communities that are Dunnottar, so maybe we won't have to do this again.

And in the case of Dunnottar, there's about, probably, 1,800 people who pay taxes in the summertime, well, who are residents in the

summertime in addition to the 700 or so that are there the rest of the year who pay taxes. So, we don't fall into that 1,000 anyway, but I think it's an artificial thing anyway. I don't think anybody in my community is in favour of amalgamation, and I don't think anybody in St. Andrews, which is the logical place for us to amalgamate with, wants to amalgamate with us either. So there's two communities who don't want to amalgamate. Why would we?

And I guess the final thing I'd say is I think—I don't think there's been much support for this amalgamation process through the whole evening, and lots of good reasons why the process is flawed and why people are upset with it, and I'll just leave it there. Thanks.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you, Mr. Knudson or Knudson, or however you pronounce your name. It's very late, but thank you for sticking with the process. It's an important one; it's one that unique in Canada. And we appreciate your views and coming forward and—whatever they may be. Individuals are allowed to speak in a democratic way and have their say, whether they approve of a bill or want to amend it and so on.

So we thank you for coming and staying so late and putting forward your views. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Kerry, for your presentation tonight. We've heard the minister many, many times talk about this is a democratic right to come in and voice your opinion. What he hasn't mentioned is that he probably isn't listening. However, you did mention that you felt this was undemocratic. You felt that the number of 1,000 was an artificial—it's just a number. We've heard a number of presentations from your community that says it's sustainable. Do you balance your budget?

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Graydon. I'm sorry, Mr. Knudson.

Mr. Knudson: We pick up our recycling; we take care of our waste. Community is sustainable, yes.

Mr. Graydon: So then, if you have a balanced budget, you pay for all the amenities that you have, what do you suppose the purpose of the amalgamation is? We've heard so many stories now that there are no benefits to be had by it, there's

actually going to be extra costs in many cases. What do you think the ulterior motive is for this type of a—
[interjection]

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Knudson.

Mr. Knudson: —for the government there is processes that they can have fewer communities to deal with. Amalgamate all these communities, you'll have fewer groups to deal with at budget time and so on, and that's all it is to them. It's not about quality of life or anything else.

Mr. Graydon: So basically what you're saying, then, is that the quality of life outside of the city of Winnipeg is not of a big concern, then, to the Manitoba NDP government?

Mr. Knudson: Not in this particular case, I don't think it is, no.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

We have arrived at the end of the list of out-of-town presenters, and I will return to the list of in-town presenters.

I will now call on Charles Chappell, RM of Victoria—[interjection] Victoria Beach, sorry. Do you have something to distribute?

* (23:20)

Mr. Charles Chappell (Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach): Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a handout, but most of the points have been made already by previous speakers. So I might just jump into this fray and answer, firstly, the question the minister asked a number of speakers: What's so unique about Victoria Beach?

Well, Madam Chair, it's an 18-square kilometre piece of peninsula land that is an urban oasis. It's utilized by upwards of 4,000 people in a special circumstance. We have nothing else like it in Manitoba. If you're talking about amalgamation, one of the principles of amalgamation is commonality. Unfortunately, no place else in Manitoba has commonality with the RM of Victoria Beach. It's existed as an independent municipality for a hundred or more years. It's got an assessment of \$400 million. It has off-the-balance-book financial ability that's staggering. They own almost a quarter section of undeveloped land that doesn't even show on the financial statements. Our neighbouring municipality, who are good folks, the RM of Alexander, they see this proposal come forward in Bill 33 and they say,

gosh, this is amazing. Let's do a takeover, and I don't blame them, and, you know, that's not said in any derogatory fashion. It's just it makes good common sense for them to do that because of the criteria of Bill 33.

What we are asking, however, is an exemption of Bill 33 for the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach. There are reasons for that. They've been dealt with in services and I'm not going to repeat them. They're set forth in the material before you. I doubt—with the issue of commonality, we don't have commonality with the RM of Alexander. It's 2,500—I'm sorry, 1,521 square kilometres; we're 18. There's no commonality.

In terms of the whole issue, Madam Chair, I think that if there is commonality it would be between the RM of Alexander and Pine View—I'm sorry—Pine Falls-Powerview, and not the urban oasis. But, having said that, I must tell you we feel, at the council, that if you do not grant the exemption we're requesting, that it would be a travesty. We've lost the RM of Victoria Beach, the unique feature.

Madam Chair, the minister used to be and is still known as a very good hockey player, very skillful, and I would hope that he can use some of his stick-handling abilities and skills to create an amendment to the legislation, to Bill 33, to exempt the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach.

And subject to any questions, Madam Chair, that concludes my remarks.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Was a very handsome hockey player at one time without all the stitches that he received while playing. But that's an aside, and it's getting late so we won't go there.

But I just appreciate your comments very much, and we've heard a lot of very articulate presentations this evening, yours as well, and I do appreciate the uniqueness that you're putting forward and, as I mentioned before, we are certainly looking at amendments with regard to Victoria Beach and Dunnottar and so on. So I—so we remained open. We said we remained open-minded and we continue to do so. But this process is to hear Manitobans speak and allow Manitobans to give their views with regard to this bill which we believe is important to the future of Manitoba in building upon the municipalities and the history that we have. We believe that this is the right time to do so for all the right reasons, quite frankly, and as Martin Luther

King says, it's always the right day to do the right thing and we believe we are doing the right thing. And—but we appreciate the views of Manitobans and this is the process that we have. So we want to do that and hear Manitobans have their say. Thank you. *[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: Excuse me, Mr. Chappell. I have to acknowledge you, so that it can go in Hansard. Sorry. Mr. Chappell.

Mr. Chappell: I said I also admire the stamina of our legislators as well, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Chappell, for your presentation. You know, I do have a question for you, but it's going to take me a little bit of a preamble to get to.

The minister mentions how unique of a process we have here in Manitoba and within Canada, and he also talks about the democratic process. And, you know, from what I've been seeing in the last 10, 11 months since he announced this in the Throne Speech, all I'm seeing is an increased amount of anxiety. Myself, being the rookie on this side of the House, the democratic process, in my opinion, for creating a bill is to go out, do some consultations, put the bill together, and you might not have to sit for three evenings sitting through committee and have 88 people bring amendments. I haven't heard one person say that they're for the bill—excuse me.

So, Mr. Chappell, my question is to you: You've got extensive experience. Have you ever seen this route taken by a government in the past?

Mr. Chappell: Madam Chair, it's not my mandate to speak to how a government legislates. I'm just here to request the amendment which I've requested. I'm ducking the question.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you, Mr. Chappell, for your presentation.

Kathleen McKibbin, private citizen. Do you have some materials to distribute? Thank you. You may begin.

Ms. Kathleen McKibbin (Private Citizen): Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity.

My name is Kathy McKibbin. I'm a taxpayer and I'm also a councillor in the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach. As a family, we're celebrating our fifth generation at Victoria Beach; my husband's grandfather was one of the founding members of Victoria Beach.

We are very disturbed by Bill 33 and wish you to (a) hoist it, from what I'm hearing behind me tonight, or (b) amend it. We pay taxes at Victoria Beach, and yet Bill 33 does not count any of the taxpayers other than the permanent residents. I believe this is the wrong criteria for amalgamation.

Victoria Beach meets all the whereas clauses of your bill. We are not quite a hundred years old. Our boundaries do reflect where people live, work and do business, and we have adequate population to provide essential infrastructure and services to our citizens and have been doing so for many, many years. Having met these criteria set by your Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux), Victoria Beach should be exempt from this legislation.

Fact: This bill is forcing Victoria Beach, the 28th largest municipal corporation in assessment, to amalgamate, even though the total assessment of the RM is \$380 million and the proportioned assessment is \$164 million.

Fact: 2,600 is the number of voters on the voters list, yet this legislation only counts 374 of those taxpayers. Our summer population ranges from 5,000 to 10,000. You only have to see the parking lot that's overrun with cars.

Fact: Victoria Beach provides an outstanding level of service to its ratepayers and to its neighbouring municipality. Shared services is a cost-effective way to operate a municipality, and this is how we've operated for many years. These include EMO, fire, as well as the lagoon and the refuse facility. The RM of Victoria Beach also provides recycling, brush pickup and chipping of the brush. The co-operation between two municipalities should be commended.

* (23:30)

Fact: We employ one policeman year-round and hire five more to handle the summer influx of up to the 10,000 people. The chief has been asked on many an occasion to assist the RCMP, as they are so short-handed. Our chief has answered calls as far away as Silver Falls. Using the RCMP as outlined in Bill 33 is not an option; they don't have the manpower.

Fact: State-of-the-art water treatment plant was built in 2008 and paid for by the ratepayers of VB with no funding from the provincial or federal governments. This entire debt will be retired in 2017.

Fact: The proposed amalgamation plan drawn up by the RM of Alexander gives VB one representative on a five-member council. This means the ratepayers of VB will have little or no influence on their local issues such as vehicle-reduced area, their municipal services, their unique culture and their shoreline.

Fact: After the storm of 2010, a shoreline advisory committee was established. This committee worked diligently for over a year along with representatives of your government and Baird Engineering. The opinion of the committee and your government was that the findings would benefit all of the south basin of Lake Winnipeg. Under Bill 33, will this initiative be lost?

Fact: 87 per cent of the tax in the RM of VB is paid by the seasonal residents. Fact: The permanent residents enjoy many services due to the dollars invested by the seasonal residents. They do not want to lose those services. Fact: Your government representatives have praised our fire, EMO department many times over, citing their training and track record as exemplary.

Fact: Taxpayers in the East Beaches area of the RMA have contacted the VB council to ask how they could be part of the RM of Victoria Beach. This was proposed to the government of Manitoba on March the 26th, 2013. This was rejected by your government.

Fact: The RM of Victoria Beach contributed over \$2 million to the Lord Selkirk School Division in 2012. This amount will certainly decline as the assessments at VB plummet due to amalgamation and loss of services.

Fact: The RMs pay the cost of municipal elections. What is, then, the purpose of October elections when the number of voters is significantly decreased?

I would like to tell you about the folks at VB. Many of the ratepayers live in cottages passed down from generation to generation. They love Victoria Beach with a passion and support a busy, community-spirited life. Their permanent homes may be somewhere else—many in Winnipeg—but their hearts are at Victoria Beach. We see this bill as ripping out our hearts.

The RM of Alexander is a rural farming municipality for the most part. How does that fit with a resort urban municipality? Fitting a round peg in a square hole never really works.

If you cannot see your way clear to hoist this bill, then please amend this bill to reflect the reality of resort municipalities, taking into consideration the full financial and population realities. This bill disenfranchises all seasonal taxpaying landowners. Why? Is it your intention that we will now be tax exempt? If so, that would have devastating results for permanent residents in resort municipalities.

In letters to Victoria Beach residents, the minister indicates that the uniqueness of Victoria Beach would remain intact with amalgamation. I strongly disagree. Without a council who cares about the uniqueness, the history, the land, the shoreline, that uniqueness will be lost. I urge you to read the letters you have received from many, many people at Victoria Beach. Two public meetings were held, one in Winnipeg and one at the beach, that clearly showed the majority of taxpayers are not in favour of amalgamation.

In closing, I would like you to think about the consequences of forced amalgamation in Ontario. I am told the animosity and outright hatred still exist today. Is that what you want for Manitoba? That's not what Manitobans want. I'm told that in many instances Ontario, the taxes doubled with amalgamation. I have no desire for my \$2,300 tax bill to double.

I'll leave you with one final thought. How would the Province of Manitoba feel if it was forced to amalgamate with the Province of Ontario? To quote Minister Lemieux at the Grosse Isle AMM meeting, bigger is not always better. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you for hanging in there tonight and staying with us very late. I appreciate your comments and I know all members here do as well, and we've heard some very passionate presentations tonight from members of the community of Victoria Beach, also Dunnottar and other communities.

I just want to say thank you very much, and as a rural MLA—and I've lived in rural Manitoba all of my life except for a short sojourn into the United States where I tried to make a living shooting a hockey puck for a short while. But I've lived in the rural Manitoba, born in Dauphin and lived in

rural Manitoba all of my life, and I have a true appreciation for rural Manitoba. I continue to live in rural Manitoba and represent rural Manitobans in the southeast part of the province. So I appreciate your comments very much and I thank you for staying with us so late. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Kathy, I—of course I want to thank you for sticking it out tonight and presenting to the committee tonight. But I also want to thank you for the leadership you and your council have shown in Victoria Beach. I know that you've been very adamant from the start of this procedure from when it was first sprung on you last fall, and I just want to encourage you to—you and your council, your community. We've heard very passionate presentations from your community, and I just want you to keep it up and, perhaps, maybe this government will actually listen to you.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

Okay, I will now call Penny McMorris, private citizen. Do you have some materials to distribute? You may begin.

Ms. Penny McMorris (Private Citizen): Hello, my name is Penny McMorris. I am a property owner, taxpayer and municipal councillor for the RM of Victoria Beach. I think I'm the last councillor that you'll hear from tonight. I would like to thank the standing committee for providing the opportunity to express my concerns regarding Bill 33 and how I feel it will unnecessarily and negatively impact the community that I am a property owner and a seasonal resident in, and one that I am very passionate about.

In a similar way to many of you sitting in front of me, I, too, have made the effort to give back to my community by serving the electors and the taxpayers in a very public role as an elected official for the RM of Victoria Beach.

As you've heard from previous speakers and as the letters state—that you have received from numerous Victoria Beach residents and taxpayers—our community is strongly opposed to amalgamation. We have little commonality with our proposed and only amalgamation partner, the RM of Alexander. Our services and communities are very different in almost every way. We feel that forcing an amalgamation of our two RMs would result in fewer services for more tax dollars for the residents of Victoria Beach.

Council representation in a ward system such as the RM of Alexander's could result in the VB taxpayers having one or possibly no one to represent their interests. We do already share our sewage lagoon and our landfill with the RM of Alexander, and our fire and first responders cover a portion of the ward 1 of Alexander.

The RM of Victoria Beach has 374 permanent residents based on the 2011 voluntary census. We have 2,616 taxpayers. We are a resort municipality whose population grows, as you've heard, from 374 permanent residents to well over 5,000 in the summer months. We have over 1,400 residences. RMVB has a portioned assessment in excess of \$164 million. That is 45 per cent of our actual assessment value of \$380 million.

We are the 28th municipality in the province in terms of our portioned assessment for 2013, and our taxpayers contributed \$2.2 million to the Lord Selkirk School Division in 2012. And the seasonal population, which makes up 87 per cent of our taxpayers, do not have the right to vote for the school trustee nor can we send our children to school in this division.

Over many decades our community has proven that it is viable and it is definitely not in need of an amalgamation partner. We consistently file our audited financial statements on time. We are PSAP compliant, maintain an office and staff in Winnipeg and run an efficient and an effective municipality with little financial support from the federal or provincial government.

* (23:40)

We treasure our unique resort status and our ability, by virtue of The Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach Act of 1933, to restrict the vehicle traffic within a portion of our municipality during the summer months. We are in process, as you have also heard, of completing a comprehensive shoreline study to protect and preserve our properties and beaches that could provide some valuable research and data for the shorelines of the entire south basin of Lake Winnipeg.

We provide our community with well-trained fire and first responder teams. We have a well-run and well equipped public works department. We provide garbage pickup, recycling, wood chipping, snow clearing, road maintenance, are members of FireSmart and provide our own VB police service governed by a provincially mandated police board.

While we are strongly opposed to amalgamation for our municipality, our council has followed the timelines and attended the information meetings and seminars offered by the provincial government since the amalgamation initiative was introduced in November of 2012. We met with our proposed amalgamation partner. We engaged legal representation for our RM. We attended district meetings in Grosse Isle and Ste. Anne. We attended the how to amalgamate seminar put on by local government. We met with the board of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. We met with the assistant Deputy Minister Linda McFadyen and her team. We met with our field consultant Bob Brown. We held two community information sessions on amalgamation, one in Winnipeg and one in Victoria Beach. We have posted updates and information on our website and in our summer newspaper in order to keep our citizens informed on this critical issue.

All of the information we have gathered, listened to and discussed continues to lead us to the same conclusion: amalgamation for the RM of Victoria Beach does not make sense. As mentioned previously, we have 2,616 taxpayers, so it is interesting to note that under the proposed Bill 33 there are no Manitoba municipalities with 1,000 taxpayers, electors or more being forced to amalgamate.

Last week while our council was meeting with the council of the RM of Dunnottar regarding amalgamation issues that we both faced, the Free Press published an article stating that Minister Lemieux was considering amendments to Bill 33 that would allow Victoria Beach and Dunnottar to remain as they are. While I was prepared to do a happy dance in the parking lot of Smitty's restaurant in Selkirk that day, I also appreciate that amendments require discussion, a vote and they require wordsmithing to ensure that the needs of the communities involved are met appropriately and fairly.

Please accept my thanks for considering amendments to this bill and take into account the circumstances and the unique features of some of the municipalities you have and will be hearing from over the next couple of evenings.

I respectfully ask and encourage that you consider the following amendments: that all taxpayers be included in the population number for any municipality. We are all counted on to pay our

taxes, yet in this current draft of Bill 33, there are 87 per cent of the Victoria Beach taxpayers who are not being counted; that those resort municipalities who currently hold their elections in July be allowed to continue to do so. The majority of our electors are in residence during the summer months and voters are more likely to exercise their right to vote when they are in the municipality.

Thank you for your consideration and for listening to my concerns as a Victoria Beach taxpayer and as an elected official of our municipality. I look forward to working with members of the Local Government team to ensure that our unique resort community is dealt with in a manner that is agreeable and fair to us all. Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, first of all, let me just say thank you very much. It's late, and thank you for your articulate presentation, and also, thank you very much for being on council and putting your name forward. And it's been mentioned often tonight that the job of a councillor and a municipal leader and a local government leader is not always appreciated. I can tell you we appreciate it in this building, all of us, no matter what political party, we appreciate the hard work that's done by municipal leaders throughout the province, including yourself. So thank you for coming this evening.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Penny, for sticking it out and staying here this late for it, but very well done presentation. And I know that—or I'm really hoping that, again, that the minister's words in the Free Press and tonight, that he is listening and hearing everybody who's presenting. You put a fantastic package together as well as many, many other presenters tonight, and I'm sure we have a few more to go tonight yet, but I don't know how he couldn't listen to this and make amendments to it.

So thank you very much and the rest of your evening.

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the presenter.

I just wanted to bring up another issue. Given the time of evening it is, and I believe there is about 10 or 11 presenters still to present, I'm asking for the committee's consent whether we can proceed for the benefit of the people that have stayed here to this hour and to hear the rest of them out. So I'm asking for the rest of the committee, with their consent, that we proceed to hear them out.

Madam Chairperson: Is there leave to—

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Seeing no further questions, thank you very much.

I will now call Mike Mason, private citizen. Do you have some materials to distribute?

Mr. Mike Mason (Private Citizen): I do.

Madam Chairperson: Our staff will hand them around. Thank you and you may begin.

Mr. Mason: I've taken the liberty of striking a few paragraphs in my presentation tonight due to the late hour, and I hope that my friend Brian will get on right after me tonight.

My name is Mike Mason and I am a resident of Winnipeg, where I work. My wife is a schoolteacher in Winnipeg and I am a paramedic. We are seasonal residents of Victoria Beach. I am also the vice-president of the Victoria Beach Cottage Owners Association.

Victoria Beach has a vibrant and engaged population of both permanent and seasonal residents who are passionate and unyielding when it comes to defending our values and protecting our unique and historic community. Bill 33 will harm our community and eradicate our autonomy in government.

The question's been asked tonight, what's unique about Victoria Beach? And tonight I want to leave with you with just a few ideas, and one is, come to a council meeting at Victoria Beach where most of the attendees arrive on bicycles, some wearing bathing suits and towels over their shoulder. Last year, my daughter, who was 7 at the time, began to be able to ride her bicycle on our safe roads due to our vehicle restriction from our cottage to a cottage a few blocks away, which is grandma's house. That is one of the unique aspects of our community that Kevin Ateah so aptly described tonight—safety for children and a safe and healthy community.

Tonight I'm here to express to you my ardent disagreement with the government's decision to force amalgamations on municipalities with less than 1,000 permanent residents. To use population as the only criteria for amalgamation is wrong-headed. This isn't just my opinion, it's the opinion of the majority of Victoria Beach, our council, the cottage owners

association. It also seems to be the opinion of your experts.

The Province commissioned a study released in April of this year entitled "Indicators and Criteria for Strong Rural Municipalities" by RDI. Minister Lemieux refers to the study in support of Bill 33. This study does not support the 1,000-permanent-resident-population criteria. To quote from the study: There is no one single definition or one correct definition for what constitutes a strong rural municipality. As a result of the complexity in defining what constitutes a strong municipality, the final definition of metrics must be a combination of judgment data rather than data alone. That's from page 7 of the study. Moreover, when I spoke to the author, Dr. Bill Ashton, about Victoria Beach and provided him with background information and data regarding our community, he seemed to feel that the RMVB was indeed very unique and that our community had a strong case to be evaluated outside the strict criteria set out in Bill 33's 1,000-permanent-resident-population criteria. The discussion I had with Dr. Ashton was clearly reflective of his study, which clearly outlines that the final definition of metrics must be a combination of judgment and data rather than data alone.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

Permanent population is only one metric of many that could and should be applied to determine a municipality's health and vitality. Victoria Beach has about 2,600 ratepayers which are permanent and seasonal residents—residents that vote for council and pay taxes. Victoria Beach's permanent population of 380 has no relationship to our council's ability to provide effective governance and municipal services. We have a seasonal population ranging from five to even ten thousand persons and a property assessment in excess of \$360 million which far exceeds RDI's criteria of a municipal taxable assessment threshold of \$130 million or more, as set out on page 1 of the study.

* (23:50)

Bill 33 as currently worded discriminates against seasonal residents that pay the same taxes as permanent residents, vote like permanent residents, can run for council like permanent residents and actively engage in all aspects of community life just like permanent residents. It defies common sense to force the amalgamation of a financially viable and flourishing municipality. Victoria Beach's permanent

population continues to grow and has doubled in the last 10 years. Our property assessment has increased at a greater rate than many municipalities. Victoria Beach provides excellent services to its ratepayers, including garbage pickup, police service, fire service, brush cleanup, recycling, and leases municipally owned property to provide this community with a grocery store, bakery and a seasonal restaurant. Moreover, we just finished building a state-of-the-art water treatment plant at cost of about three and a half million dollars without any government assistance from the Province or the federal government.

Victoria Beach provides its residents with more municipal services than many other rural municipalities in Manitoba at little to no cost to the Province. We've kept our financial house in order for decades, and we've never heard from the Province at any point that we couldn't manage our affairs, and we certainly never expressed any desire to be amalgamated.

Bill 33 will harm our community and eradicate our autonomy and governance. Here are some brief examples. By being forced to amalgamate with the RM of Alexander, we'd most likely lose our Victoria Beach Police service and have to rely on regional RCMP coverage. This would generally mean going from one or two officers year round and six officers during peak periods in July and August located in our community to relying on RCMP coverage out of Pine Falls, Lac du Bonnet and Grand Beach, with little to no increase in their staffing complement. I do not mean any disrespect to the RCMP, but this is a significant reduction in service to Victoria Beach ratepayers.

We'd also lose our RM status, which would see us absorbed into ward 1 of the RMA. Therefore, we would lose the self-governance of local—of the local council of five and be governed by one representative from the Eastern Beaches ward, perhaps not even from the former boundaries of Victoria Beach, who would govern Victoria Beach with the other RMA councillors. Simply stated, we lose our autonomy, which has served us well for decades.

We'd also be at risk of losing our unique vehicle restriction that is in place from the last Thursday in June to the Monday of the Labour Day weekend. Our vehicle restriction adds to our sense of community and fosters a safe and healthy environment for our children and our community members.

I'd like to quote a paragraph from correspondence from Minister Lemieux's office, received on September the 5th: I also understand that you may have concerns about protecting Victoria Beach's restriction on vehicular traffic. I'm pleased to confirm that we can ensure that the provisions in The Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach Act related to the restricting vehicular traffic will continue to apply in the area of the former municipality of Victoria Beach after an amalgamation takes place. Section 1 of the RMVB act states: notwithstanding the provisions of The Highway Traffic Act, the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach may enact bylaws forbidding the use by motor vehicles of a highway, street, road or boulevard. This means the Province gives our council of Victoria Beach the ability to enact a bylaw restricting motor vehicle traffic. This current municipal bylaw restricting traffic is bylaw 1420. Any municipal council of Victoria Beach or an amalgamated municipality with Victoria Beach in ward 1 could repeal this bylaw, and, therefore, the minister's assurance that our vehicle restriction will be protected is without merit.

Victoria Beach is a strong municipality which does deliver great services. Like many other Manitoba municipalities, we are already assuring services like fire, medical response, landfill, sewage lagoon with our neighbouring municipality by mutual agreement of our councils.

Victoria Beach has faced emerging challenges head-on. In October of 2010, the severe weather conditions on Lake Winnipeg caused significant erosion along our shoreline, and ideas in our community were divided on how to protect our shorelines and beaches. Our community debated the issues and council formed a shoreline advisory committee. The committee had hearings and formed the community principles of our shoreline management plan.

We have engaged the services of a world-class geotechnical firm to study our erosion issues and develop management strategies based on our community values. Our shoreline management plan will be the first of its kind on Lake Winnipeg and could become a gold standard for shoreline management on Lake Winnipeg. This exemplifies Victoria Beach's ability to face emerging challenges.

My objection to the bill is shared by my wife, our VB friends, the cottage owners association, the council and, I believe, by the majority of

Victoria Beach taxpayers. The local taxpayers, not the government, should decide if and when amalgamation is necessary—

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: One minute, sir.

Mr. Mason: —thank you—since they are the ones most affected by that decision. And we are the ones who directly pay for the services provided by their local government.

Recently, it appears that the government may be considering amendments to the bill, and I thank you for that.

Minister Lemieux, you were quoted in the Free Press saying the goal of the amendments is to recognize the population in resort municipality climbs in the summer months, and because of those seasonal residents, their tax base and municipal operations are healthy. Those statements are true.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

I would encourage the government to adopt amendments that do recognize seasonal residents in resort municipalities. I'd also encourage you to recognize municipal tax bases greater than \$130 million and apply multiple metrics in combination with judgment to assess the vitality and health of a municipality, not just a single metric.

I understand that the current government has the votes in the House to pass the bill, therefore the bill will become law later this week. With that being said, I'd encourage the government to work with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and each individual municipality to determine whether an amalgamation plan is appropriate and necessary.

Finally, I would much rather spend my time not fighting with the government on amalgamation, but working with the government on the health of Lake Winnipeg to improve the health of a great lake that is terribly endangered at this point.

Thank you for your time tonight.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much for your presentation. It's much appreciated, I know, by all. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you Mr.—oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Ewasko.

Mr. Ewasko: Sorry. Boy, that was quick there, Madam Chairperson, four minutes to 12.

Mike, thank you very much for the presentation, and I commend you and the cottage association as well for jumping on board with the council and the reeve and trying to make sure that the residents of Victoria Beach, whether they're permanent or seasonal, are very well informed on this matter. And I just hope that, again, like many, many other presenters as well, I hope that the minister is listening. You do mention a few things in here that makes me question the validity of the possible promises that are coming up, but I guess we can cross our fingers and hope that it comes to light.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks very much for your presentation tonight, Mr. Mason. You did an excellent job, as did every presenter tonight. You put a lot of thought into it, a lot of passion, and I guess my question to you is, if the minister was real serious, if he was real serious about doing an amendment to the bill—after making it public in the Free Press—if he would've made the amendment available to the residents of Victoria Beach and you were satisfied with it or had some consultation in it, would you have been here at midnight tonight? Would a lot of people have been inconvenienced by staying at home? Do you think—*[interjection]*—really necessarily be here, then, if it—if that had been made available to you? And he talked about this a week ago.

Mr. Mason: Well, I think I'd rather be in my bed than here on any given night.

Consultation is key. At this point consultation has not happened. Community involvement has not happened. Who would be better to assess the health of a community than input from the citizens that live, work and play in that community?

I thank you for your question tonight.

Madam Chairperson: Any further questions? Seeing none, thank you, Mr. Mason, for your presentation.

I will now call Brian Hodgson, Victoria Beach Cottage Owners Association. You may begin.

Mr. Brian Hodgson (Victoria Beach Cottage Owners Association): Mr. Chair—Madam Chair, members of committee, thanks for this opportunity. I'm Brian Hodgson. I'm the president of Victoria Beach Cottage Owners Association. My prepared notes are repetitive to what has gone on tonight in many, many ways. I'm going to abbreviate some of

what I've said in the notes and try and get this over with a little quicker.

I'm encouraged by what Minister Lemieux has said about the amendments, which we expect will be forthcoming within the next few days. I'm certainly looking forward to them.

* (00:00)

Bill 33 states that 100-year-old communities must be failing to provide essential infrastructure and services to its citizens. It's disappointing for municipalities who currently operate as friendly neighbours, sharing, for example, fire and other services by agreement and cost-sharing, to find that the minister and his staff refuse to provide facts, figures or any evidence to support their opinions contained in the preamble of the bill.

It's puzzling to read that the Province reads—the Province questions the accuracy of the most federal—most recent federal census, while Bill 33, in section 2, relies solely on this information.

It's of further concern to Victoria Beach residents, taxpayers and citizens that future changes can be implemented by regulation, a Cabinet decision without the opportunity for a citizen to appear before a committee such as this during the sitting of the Legislature.

The specific concerns that we have—and I say an awful lot of those have been talked about already and I'll just touch on them. The policing services—we've got a community that—permanent residents, three, four hundred people; summertime, there's 2,600 taxpayers, 1,700 properties. Our family has two cottages; we represent 15 people that are down there. How many are down there in the peak of the summer? Ten thousand? More? It's a lot of people, a lot of money being spent on the beach.

How many people are from out of town? I think there's about 250 of those properties that are owned by people who do not live in Manitoba. They're bringing a pile of money into this province. Can't remember how many are from the States. Of the people I know down there, seven of them have come from the United States. They've bought cottages and a number of those are on the lakefront. They've bought cottages worth 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 hundred million—million dollars, sorry—hundreds of thousands of dollars. They've spent millions of dollars, in some cases, developing those cottages in our province because it's a special resort; it's a special place that has a lot of meaning to people. Most of these people

that are now living out of the province started in Manitoba, they've moved away, they still come back because Victoria Beach is such a unique place.

To go through amalgamation—or be put through amalgamation with Alexander and to lose our uniqueness, I suspect that the property values at Victoria Beach would go downhill. An awful lot of these people that are coming to Manitoba from out of province and out of country would disappear and the tax base would go down the tubes. School taxes would be reduced because, again, assessments are down. I just think it's a bad, bad decision to look at amalgamation.

Fire protection: We have our own fire protection services. We provide that protection to Albert Beach and Hillside under agreement with Alexander already. We don't need their services coming to us. In fact, Alexander doesn't provide that kind of service to ward 1 at all. So they—Alexander is already getting that service from Victoria Beach. They can't help us. They can't improve our lot at all. So how would our service be improved and—at—how would it reduce cost—the costs through amalgamation?

Maintenance facilities: We have our own equipment and maintenance staff. Many of them are specially trained to look after that water treatment plant; by Manitoba—by provincial regulation, they have to be. We've got our brush, we've got our garbage, we've got all those good things. Under amalgamation, where will the equipment and staff be located and what priority will our existing municipality receive? Discussions with residents of the cottage areas just outside our municipal boundaries indicate that they get very few services provided by the municipality of Alexander. Will our municipal services in the RM of Victoria Beach be improved by amalgamation? I don't think so.

Bill 33 states that the present council cannot enter into agreements which would be binding on the new municipality. How can our municipality insure their assets under these terms?

Taxpayers—as taxpayers, we should have the right to be informed and have a vote. We are disappointed and concerned about the future based on what we see in Bill 33 as it's presently written.

Who will bear the cost of changing all the legal titles to property and real—to property, real and personal? Will it be the government or the new municipality? Either way, it will be the taxpayers that have to bear that large and unnecessary expense

to change the titles for all the municipalities forced to amalgamate. I don't know what that bill would be, millions; no cost saving there.

Manitoba has a great history as a recreational province and as a unique—and as such, the unique seasonal resort municipality designation was created to enable the three municipalities to have councils elected by the ratepayers at a time when they are in residence and can participate in the pre-election discussions and become informed as to who will best represent them. How will elections in October improve elector knowledge and participation in democracy?

The preamble for Bill 33 insinuates that small municipalities cannot provide the services necessary for a municipality to function. The RM of Victoria Beach not only provides excellent services for the municipality, but assists the RM of Alexander by providing some of those services to them. With the Victoria Beach mill rate less than the Alex-RM of Alexander charges—and it's my understanding that only 50 per cent of the money collected in ward 1 is spent in ward 1. The other 50 per cent is used in the other wards. How would this improve our level of service?

The government's support of amalgamation on a voluntary basis would be excellent. Their mandating it where it is evident that municipal services are not or cannot be provided may be a worthwhile undertaking. Bill 33 must be revised to remove the forced amalgamation or at least exclude the municipalities such as Victoria Beach, Dunnottar and others which are self-sufficient. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much, again, for your presentation. I know we all thank you. It's a late evening. Thank you very much, and drive safely no matter where you're going, and possibly you have friends or you reside in Winnipeg so you don't have to travel too far. But nevertheless, there are people that are travelling outside of Winnipeg, so please drive carefully, everyone, and thank you very much for staying with us tonight.

Mr. Graydon: Well, thank you, Mr. Hodgson, for the presentation and it's—I'll repeat myself, there was—there's been many, many presentations from Victoria Beach as well as other places, and they've all been basically 'saming'—saying the same thing. They've—and you've done a very good job of explaining the situation, your uniqueness, the fact

that you do balance your budgets and so on and so forth.

But my question to you is, how do you feel about reading in the Free Press that there's going to be some amendment that addresses Victoria Beach, and you being the president of the Victoria Beach Cottage Owners Association not having any correspondence, no consultation, not a whisper from the minister—how do you feel about that? This is just going to be another top-down to you, or are you going to be happy with it, or are you going to be back here at another committee?

Mr. Hodgson: Hope I won't be back. Well, I'm certainly encouraged to hear that, you know, the amendments are forthcoming, and I say that with a positive note. I would like to have thought, or would like to think that our council, municipal council, was involved in discussions that resulted in the amendments being put forward. I don't consider myself to be all that important as far as the amendments go as for the political side of it. I don't consider myself a political animal, so that part didn't disturb me. But, as I say, I would to have thought that at least—or I'd like to think that our 'commun'—or municipal council was involved in it, and if not, be a little disappointed, I guess.

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Hodgson, when you're elected as the president of the cottage owners association, I think you're being very, very humble by taking the position that you have taken, and I'm sure that the people that elected you would have appreciated you at least being consulted. And so I think you're taking your position very—I can't say lightly because you're here, and it's after midnight so you're not taking it lightly. I think you're just being far too kind. And if I was in your position, I would be really questioning why I would have to learn about an amendment in the Free Press. And I'm sure that if your council was aware, they would have notified you, wouldn't you think?

* (00:10)

Mr. Hodgson: I did hear that it was forthcoming or that the amendments had been talked about at about the same time as I read it in the paper, so I did hear that. But my presence here is, like I say, in one way is very personal. Like Kathy's family, my grandchildren are fifth generation, there's seven of them for now and there may be more. They all ride bikes around the beach; they go to the stores. I rode a bike around the beach when I was that tall. It's a community. I've got friends that I grew up with. I

still know them, they're still down at the beach, you know, 60 years later, they're still my friends. I don't know where else you get that. I don't get it in the city because everybody moves. At the beach, everybody comes back. Well, there's people that don't live in Manitoba, they don't live in Canada, but I've known them all my life and they're all there. So it's the community aspect of that, that's very, very special.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you very much.

I will now call James Brennan, private citizen. He is not here.

Ivan McMorris, private citizen. Do you have some papers to distribute?

Mr. Ivan McMorris (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

Madam Chairperson: Okay, you may commence.

Mr. McMorris: Thank you very much. I'd just like to begin by saying it's a privilege to be here. I was unaware that this sort of process is only done in Manitoba. I thought bills were debated with the public across the country, so I'm proud to be a Manitoban and hear that this is what we do here.

Nothing, unfortunately, I'm going to say tonight is anything that you haven't already heard 10 times or more, so I'll try to keep it brief.

As far as amendments to the bill, it seems to me that the most critical one is to broaden the criteria as to define what municipality ought to consider or be forced to amalgamate with a neighbour. There's other criteria, could include the number of taxpayers, they could include the size of the assessment base, they can include the range of services that are provided by the municipalities already. A number of citizens are permanent residents is not the only criteria that could be used. I'd also like to point out that it's fairly well acknowledged that the 2011 census, particularly in rural Canada, is considered to be unreliable.

Now there's no way—I'm from Victoria—I have a summer residence in Victoria Beach—there's no way that our population would grow to a thousand if everybody was forced to complete the census, but, nevertheless, there are probably be municipalities around Manitoba that might come in—be included in that area where—in that situation where the census figures are, in fact, completely unreliable.

Secondly, as for an amendment goes, I would encourage to allow flexibility with the timing of elections. It seems to me that elected representatives

should be encouraging democratic participation and by moving the election dates from the time when it's most convenient for some residents or many of the residents to be voting to a more inconvenient time would serve the opposite purpose.

Finally, I guess it's simply difficult—this wasn't really an amendment—I don't really understand the purpose of the legislation. It seems to me that where municipalities may be struggling, there could be other ways for—to help, for the provincial government to help those municipalities on a more flexible basis; however, that's more of a broader, I guess, criticism but I would like to reiterate those first two amendments that I would propose.

I'd just like to also touch—Minister Lemieux, earlier, asked one of our long-time residents what, if he could put a finger on one thing, and I think it goes to the fact that the—in our case, in our municipality of Victoria Beach, there's a provincial legislation specifically allowing the municipal government to control vehicular traffic. That, to my knowledge, is unique amongst municipalities in—or certainly special, and that I think there's a lot of municipalities—people all across Manitoba think that their community is special and in many ways unique, but the fact that the provincial government a long time ago recognized that that special quality, and, in fact, when Victoria Beach residents tell people from elsewhere either in Manitoba or across Canada that we go to a place where for two months in the summertime people can't drive cars, people just—who haven't been there don't understand what makes that a good thing. So I think it is a kind of a special place particularly with that vehicle restriction, and so, therefore, I would like to recommend that those other amendments be included in the legislation. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much for your presentation, and your point being, of course, that—and your final comments were that everyone thinks they're unique somehow and everyone thinks they're different. But the point that you made with regard to a municipality having that ability to look at traffic in your own community, and the fact that you highlighted the legislation that pointed out many years ago and made a specific section with regard to that is—it's really quite unique in Manitoba.

And so I appreciate your comments and your—and many have made comments, as you pointed out earlier, similar to yours and even expanded on

yours, so I appreciate your brevity and keeping your comments short. But nevertheless your point was made from the heart, and it's appreciated, I know, by all no matter what political party. You stayed here to the end and you're correct: We are very unique, to use that word again, in Canada where our citizens can come forward and speak as they wish democratically, openly. Whether they criticize some legislation or want to add to it in a constructive way, it's up to them, but they have their 10 minutes in a respectful way to recognize their democratic system.

So I thank you for doing that and I thank you for staying so late to be able to do it. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Ivan, for being here tonight, and it's our privilege to be here to listen to you. It's your right and our privilege, so I just want to thank you. And the other thing, although it's been said, been many presentations from Victoria Beach, one of the political axioms is repeat the message, repeat, repeat, repeat and eventually maybe they'll start to listen. So that's what we're hoping for here. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your presentation.

I would now call Rudy Isaak, private citizen. Rudy's not here. Thank you.

David Sanders, private citizen. David is also not here.

Richard Brownscombe. No?

Mr. Pedersen: Rather than—there's only a handful of people left to present. Can we just go directly to those, rather than running through the list—

Madam Chairperson: I think the Clerk needs to record that they aren't here, so if—in order for the Clerk to be able to track who needs to be called tomorrow. Thank you.

Richard Brownscombe is not here.

Garett Surcon. Thank you, Garett.

Mr. Garett Surcon (Private Citizen): Good evening, members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns regarding Bill 33.

My wife and I have a cottage at Victoria Beach and we share our local council's concerns that Bill 33 will negatively affect a lot of the things we value about the community. Since I began preparing these comments, I understand that the government is

discussing amendments that might address all my concerns but I'd still like to share my thoughts with you tonight.

I have to say, over the past six months, I've spent more time than I would've ever imagined reading about and thinking about and talking about municipal amalgamation. My wife and I have attended the town hall meetings held by our Victoria Beach Council. We've spoken with—or I've spoken with the CAO of Alexander to get their perspective, as they're our potential amalgamation partner. We met with Eric Plamondon, the special assistant to Minister Lemieux, and I've read the RDI reports upon which Bill 33 is based and even tried to skim the bill myself. And I just say this to provide some context for my forthcoming comments.

*(00:20)

I've tried to consider and understand both the pros and cons of the bill. However, at the end of the day, I believe the bill will still be a detriment to resort communities such as Victoria Beach, and I would ask that communities such as this be granted an exemption under the bill.

So, from my meeting with Mr. Plamondon and from the government's amalgamation website, I understand that the RDI research on strong municipalities provided a lot of the justification and background for the bill. And I don't—I'm not going to attempt to question the thoroughness of the research, but I do believe that it relates more to the typical rural municipality rather than those designated as resort communities, such as Victoria Beach.

Just as an example, the opening paragraph of the report states that, quote: Two fundamental views of the strength of the community focus on (1) the size or capacity of a jurisdiction to service its population, and (2) whether the population or economy in the jurisdiction is on a trajectory of growth.

So to consider that first point, size or capacity, the recommended indicators are 3,000 residents and a taxable assessment of \$130 million or more. But, again, as many people have stated, only permanent residents are counted, and Victoria Beach has less than 400.

So while only counting permanent residents might make good sense in a typical community, I don't believe it does in a resort community. For example, many members of our council and administrative staff are not permanent residents. They live and work in Winnipeg. Many of Victoria

Beach's 2,600 taxpayers also are very invested in the health of the RM. So because of this, I think a resort community is much stronger and has much greater capacity than the number of the permanent residents might suggest, so you might say a resort community can punch above its weight. So, therefore, I think only considering permanent residents is too limited of an approach to evaluate the strength of a resort community.

And I think the second point in the RDI research is whether or not the municipality's on a trajectory of growth. Again, I don't think this is particularly valid in a resort community. So, whereas the typical community, I would believe, is a place for residents to live, work and play, a resort community is primarily a place for its residents to play. We're not really interested in developing our local economy or attracting significant industry and commerce; we're looking for a place to forget about such things. So, again, I think the RDI research, although it's thorough, I don't know if it can directly apply to the resort communities.

And I just—I'll make one further point on that research. The report does say several times that there is not a single indicator that can by—that can guide municipal groupings but several indicators are needed and that that should be combined with field experience. So, again, I think Bill 33 is only taking the permanent resident indicator and ignoring the field experience and other indicators as well.

And I think if we can forget about the research, the RDI research, and consider another method for evaluating the health of a municipality, such as the delivery of services and efficiency of operation, communities such as Victoria Beach and, I'm sure, other resort communities are doing quite well. We've heard about all the services that Victoria Beach provides to its residents, such as police, fire, medical, et cetera. In regard to our administrative efficiency, I understand our administrative costs to be approximately \$200,000, which would be less than \$80 per taxpayer. So I think this is an accomplishment that many larger municipalities would be envious of.

And, finally, I'll just address a counter-argument that I often have heard by people who were in favour of the amalgamation process. And the argument would say, yes, Victoria Beach seems like a very healthy community, but amalgamating will only make it stronger, that extra diversity and size will make it a much better community. And I think, while

this sounds great in theory, I'm just skeptical in practice it would work out that way. While we currently have five elected representatives, we would have a maximum of one under the proposed amalgamation, as only our permanent 350 residents would be counted. Furthermore, as elections would shift from summer to fall, I think, you know, we probably would all be a little less engaged in the process when we're home from the cottage and involved in our own local Winnipeg communities' local elections.

And then I can't help believe when some of those tough monetary decisions need to be made by an amalgamated council, such as whether or not to spend some limited dollars on shoreline protection or services for seasonal residents, that these could be the first to be cut, especially if the majority of councils would not be elected by seasonal residents.

And finally, I just want to address one more way that I think the intent of Bill 33 doesn't quite fit with a resort community. The government's web page on amalgamation states that a lot has changed since Manitoba's boundaries were drawn over 100 years ago, as back then boundaries were defined by how far a horse could carry a bushel of grain. And I think this is probably true for a lot of municipalities but Victoria Beach was created as a municipality in 1919 and it was a resort community where people came to play, and it remains a resort community today. Not a lot has changed. But I think amalgamating us into a larger, more rural municipality would change that foundation of what has made us successful.

So, just in summary, I think that the RDI research which Bill 33 appears to be based on isn't particularly valid as it relates to resort communities. And given that we're already efficiently delivering services, I'd ask that the bill be amended to allow resort communities the option to opt out.

Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much for your comments, they're much appreciated. And I'm sure the committee members here appreciate that you tried your best not to duplicate or to repeat what had been said prior to you.

Just a couple comments with regard to the Rural Development Institute's report on strong municipalities; they did take a look at population, but somehow that has been maybe overstressed here because they also looked at tax base in municipalities.

They also look—used research including StatsCan data, they used the AMM's municipal healthy checklist when they made—did their study. They also used New Brunswick's building stronger local governments and regional reports which had gone through this process. So they tried to get a pan-Canadian view as well as a cross-Manitoba view on how to approach amalgamations.

And I know the analysis they did was certainly not meant to be perfect and they never professed or said to be, this was just one avenue and certainly we took a look and made use of that. And when they were looking at the made in Manitoba report they took a look at different municipalities to demonstrate population size and size of tax base that were important determining factors. But what many municipalities, quite frankly, will be strong into the future.

In addition to the population tax base, they looked at their trajectory of growth, administrative deficiency and debt load. So they took a look at the whole package. Again, saying it's not perfect but as you pointed out, they are saying though that there is a uniqueness about certain communities, as I understand it, in Manitoba and that's what we have talked about recently, talked about this with your mayor, for example, of Victoria Beach. I've talked to the mayor of Dunnottar and had these discussions and consultations with them to determine the uniqueness, and quite frankly, taking a look at amendments that could be brought in by our government to address that uniqueness. And that, quite frankly, is something we're look at right now and in a serious way, from departmental officials to others.

And with what I've heard tonight and there's still more people to hear tomorrow night, then possibly the next night as well, so we want the process to take place. We've talked about the uniqueness of the process itself. We—it's important to hear people and allow them to say, because everyone has a different viewpoint to make and it's important, and that may assist us in making our amendments and developing our amendments.

So thank you very much for being here tonight. It's late but we thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Garrett, for your presentation. There's just one small misconception I would like to clear up for you. This bill was—or the intent of the bill was announced in the Throne Speech in November; the RDI study which you've

quoted, and which I've read, was commissioned by the government in February of 2013. So the bill was already conceived before the RDI study was done. Thank you.

* (00:30)

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Garrett, and your partner, your other half, for staying so late and presenting tonight. Yes, the other thing that I wanted to add in there on top of what my colleague, Mr. Pedersen, had said, it's interesting that the minister mentions all those indicators and, really, the only indicator that's—does show up in the bill, which was sort of an afterthought, pre-thought, whatever, it's sort of interesting how we spin things here at the Leg. Besides the population, I mean, the indicators all point to Victoria Beach would not fall under this forced amalgamation bill.

But it's just—I appreciate you going through the process and sticking it out.

And the other thing that I really want to point out is the fact that going out and doing that self-education piece and doing all the research and talking to the various people and getting different perspectives is really what a lot of people need to do, and that's awesome. So I applaud you for that. Thanks, Garrett, a lot.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

I now call Jennifer Sime. Do you have materials to distribute?

Ms. Jennifer Sime (Private Citizen): I do not.

Madam Chairperson: Okay, you may begin.

Ms. Sime: Good morning, everyone, I am here to voice concerns about the proposed amalgamation between the municipality of our seasonal residence in the RM of Victoria Beach, that and the RM of Alexander.

My family and I are summer residents at Victoria Beach and my children and I live there from the end of June until the first day of school. We, like so many other seasonal residents, start spending our weekends there in May and continue to do so until the Thanksgiving weekend, so up to six months of the year.

My husband and I selected Victoria Beach in no small reason because of its restricted access in the

summer. Kids can roam the roads without fear of being hit by cars, as it becomes a community that relies on foot and bicycle traffic alone.

As a community we have started tackling the serious issue of shoreline erosion by consulting experts who have studied each individual shoreline and the differing currents, winds, angles and soil compositions contributing to erosion at each location in order to fund and protect both the lakefront property holders and the sand beaches that we all share. In addition, the municipality offers us garbage and recycling pickup, as well as our own local police force which interacts daily with the community, brush pickup, as well as fire and paramedic services, a bakery, a store and a restaurant.

While I trust the intentions behind the development of Bill 33, it takes into consideration only one factor before forcing amalgamation on smaller communities, that of permanent residency. I argue that this single criteria in determining the future strength of a resort municipality is, in my opinion, erroneous and unfair. The RM of Victoria Beach is a vibrant, self-sustaining community with a large tax and voting base. There are 1,900 properties, 2,600 taxpayers and registered voters, and in the summer months an estimated population swell to well over 5,000. Victoria Beach has a total assessed land value of \$380 million. It's an economically healthy community that requires no financial assistance from the provincial government, and that includes during reconstruction of our \$3.2-million water treatment plant a few years ago.

Despite the large population for up to six months of the year, our healthy assessed land value, the municipality's record of financial independence, in addition to all the services we are grateful to enjoy at Victoria Beach, Bill 33 takes into consideration the sole criteria of permanent residency before forcing amalgamation. In meeting with government representatives about this issue, I have come to understand that the 2013 report by the RDI, titled "Indicators and Criteria for Strong Rural Municipalities in Manitoba" was used to help inform the development of Bill 33. However, this report itself recognizes the complexity of measuring the strength and future sustainability of rural communities. Because of this, an executive from our cottage owners association, who spoke tonight, spoke directly with one of the authors, and in that discussion it was recognized that Victoria Beach is a unique 'committittee'-community and requires more than one single metric of permanent residency to

accurately and fairly assess its viability. To quote directly from page 7 of the RDI report: "There is no one single definition or only one correct definition for what constitutes a strong rural municipality. As a result of the complexity in defining what constitutes a strong municipality, the final definition of metrics must be a combination of judgment and data rather than data alone."

Should the government proceed with using this one criteria to force amalgamation on Victoria Beach, our community will not be afforded even one of the five council seats with the RM of Alexander. Rather, our 2,600 voters would be reduced to representation based on our 350 permanent residents and thus be assimilated into a larger geographical area known as ward 1, which is comprised of several communities along the eastern beaches.

In addition, with elections in October as opposed to the summer months, many residents of Victoria Beach will end up disenfranchised. But for the sake of argument, with even one voice on council, how could that individual possibly have enough weight to be able to protect the unique and important aspects of our community? With a forced partnership under Bill 33, Victoria Beach loses the ability to determine not only our own form of governance, but with it all our autonomy and authority to act in the best interests of our community, our ability to protect our restricted car access in the summer, to protect our own local police force who interact daily with the community—my 6-year-old son likes to wave hello to them all.

With the greatest respect for those who serve with the RCMP, there are monumental staffing constraints within the force. I myself have called the RCMP on two occasions while heading through the RM of Alexander to report a drunk driver my husband, children and I were watching swerve into and out of oncoming traffic, only to be told later there was no way to investigate despite being provided with a licence plate number, car model and exact location. If the RCMP is so overworked to not be able to respond to these issues in either a timely manner or at all, I can assume that police response to someone driving in the restricted area, loud parties or barking dogs at 3 a.m., bicycle thefts or break-ins won't register either.

We will also lose our own authority to fund the shoreline management recommendations of the experts currently studying the somewhat urgent issue of shoreline erosion. Without our own autonomy and

authority, I fear our community will lose aspects we value so very much as they come under the control of a rural municipality who, with respect to them, simply have vastly differing needs and priorities from a resort community.

In light of the unique aspects of Victoria Beach as a resort as opposed to a strictly rural community, that has 1,900 properties and a tax and voting population of over 2,600, property in assessment in excess of \$360 million, in excess of 700 building permits and millions of dollars in new cottage construction over the past decade, I ask you to consider the possibility that using the lone metric of permanent population to assess strength, in this case, is neither accurate nor in the best interests of this community.

I am very hopeful to read the September 4th Winnipeg Free Press article suggesting the government is considering amendments to Bill 33 to exclude resort communities such as Victoria Beach from forced amalgamation. I ask the committee, under part 2, section 9, of Bill 33, The Municipal Modernization Act, to recommend that Victoria Beach and similar resort communities not favouring amalgamation be excluded. Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much. As you point out and others have pointed out from Victoria Beach, is that not only does your population rise dramatically in the summertime but your actual tax base, as well, is far above what the RDI report looked as—at a minimum. And so, indeed, one could even argue that it even meets the 3,000 population or more, but as we've all agreed is that it's not just population alone. The 1,000 was just a trigger that's in The Municipal Act that triggered—new municipalities would use that figure, and that was brought in by the previous government in '97.

So, having said that, I really appreciate you staying so late tonight and making your presentation and reaffirming what others before you have said. It's important, and I know members of this committee are listening to you, and I really appreciate you staying so late. So, good morning, as you put it, and drive carefully wherever you may be going. So thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Jennifer, for presenting tonight and for bringing your thoughts, and your passion for your beach community is obvious, and a great place to have the kids all summer and be able to enjoy the community there. So thank you very much for your presentation. We do appreciate it.

* (00:40)

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call Dave Zeglinski. No, Dave is not here.

Ken Capelle? He's also not here.

Vic Janzen, private citizen.

Mr. Vic Janzen (Private Citizen): Morning.

Madam Chairperson: You may start.

Mr. Janzen: I'm a taxpayer at RM of Alexander and Victoria Beach. It's all been said tonight many, many times. I have absolutely nothing to add. Thank you very much for listening.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: I do believe in my 14 years as a minister that's the shortest presentation I think I've ever heard. But you have listened patiently all night and it's a credit to you. We've seen you sitting here waiting your turn. And it shouldn't be overlooked that—the fact that, in case someone did miss something that you felt passionate about, you had the opportunity to raise it, and you stayed here, and thank you so much for that. It's much appreciated.

Madam Chairperson: Okay, I've got Mr. Pedersen, then Mr. Graydon—[interjection] You'll pass?

Mr. Graydon: Thanks very much for your presentation tonight, Vic. It's clear that—or this morning. It's clear that you are a morning person and a man of few words, and I think we really appreciate that. I know that I appreciate that at this time of the morning myself, but you wouldn't be here if it wasn't that you were really concerned, and that's important. So thanks very much, and I like to see the people doing the things that they are doing to keep supporting democracy the way you are. Thanks very much.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. I'm sorry, we have one—Mr. Janzen? Mr. Janzen, we have one more question for you.

Mr. Briese: It's not a question. I was just going to say thanks very much. I was talking to you at the back of the room about the length of your presentation, and the cheque will be in the mail tomorrow. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. I would now like to call Liz Foster. No? Thank you. John Deacon? Mr.

Deacon is not here. Mark McLearn is also not here. And just as information, I have to read each of these names so they end up in Hansard.

Brian Glowacki. Do you have some material to distribute?

Mr. Brian Glowacki (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. You may begin.

Mr. Glowacki: Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I certainly promise to be brief. I now have a better sense of the life of a politician; I'm going to keep my day job.

My name is Brian Glowacki and I married into a family that has lived in Victoria Beach for over 90 years. We have just recently built our future retirement home in Victoria Beach. My property backs directly on the quarter section of unspoiled and undeveloped land that Kevin Ateah spoke about earlier.

You know you've found something unique and special when your 15-year-old son says he loves it there and would rather live in—there than Winnipeg. As a parent, the safe and caring environment provided by Victoria Beach is worth protecting. As a future permanent resident of Victoria Beach, Victoria Beach is worth fighting for. It's the reason why I've waited over six hours to speak.

The current version of Bill 33 does not recognize nor allow for the protection of uniqueness, municipality characteristics and qualities, some of which have been in place for close to 100 years, as you have heard earlier today, are highly treasured and which make a municipality a community. In addition, Bill 33 does not assure that a small but vibrant municipality has an equal voice in any merged municipality. It is the inherent risk of losing cherished community qualities, which this bill introduces, that concerns us and numerous other cottage owners and permanent residents.

Equally frustrating, the provincial government is being contradictory with introducing a bill that states, as a non-permanent resident landowner, I don't count, but when it comes to paying provincial school tax, as a non-permanent resident landowner, I do count. So I count some of the time but not all of the time. I do know I will count during the next provincial election.

The NDP government has an opportunity here to succeed with their municipality restructuring

goals while at the same time alleviate landowner concerns and remain consistent in the treatment of landowners. As it been—as it has been suggested earlier, for instance, by revising the threshold for municipality consolidation from a thousand permanent residents to a thousand landowners, a.k.a. school taxpaying landowners, Bill 33 would effectively recognize cottage-oriented municipalities like Victoria Beach. Or more simplistically—and it has been suggested last week—provide amalgamation exceptions where financially secure municipalities are involved, such as the case with Victoria Beach, a piece of paradise within Manitoba. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much for your presentation and staying and spending most of the night with us. We could see you at the back of the room. And it is appreciated, very much by us all, and it's a real—it's a privilege to come before a committee and because we're unique in this sense in Canada; no one else does this.

So thank you very much to—for hanging in there, quite frankly, and giving your presentation.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for your presentation tonight.

Being as that you're not an individual that has long ties or long-standing family ties with Victoria Beach, you spoke with genuine passion and concern about your family. You also pointed out very eloquently that democracy's not an option in Manitoba, that it's a right. And when you're asked to pay taxes but you're not allowed to have a voice, that's taking away your rights, that's taking away the rights of Manitobans, and it's wrong—it's wrong to do that. And this minister has to address not just your rights, but all the rights. When he sits here and talks about democracy at 1 o'clock in the morning, it's time that this government started to practise what they've been preaching for the last seven hours.

Thank you very much for your presentation. I really appreciated that.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call Joanne Gibson, private citizen.

Ms. Joanne Gibson (Private Citizen): You know what they say in the teaching profession, repetition, repetition, it's good.

I'm not going to use my—because you've heard it all—it's just one page, but I would like to congratulate all of you, really. As a schoolteacher for over 40 years, you are no longer attention deficit, you have passed the true test of six hours of—and I've been watching you, imagining what you might have looked like when you were little, so well done. And well done to everybody that hung in there to the end.

I'm just—my—I think my one point is I'm a Victoria Beach. I have been a renter, I have—I'm a landowner, I'm a taxpayer, I am a seasonal resident. So what I'm asking you to do is, please, let me count, let all of the people who pay taxes—I pay more taxes on my cottage than my father-in-law who is a permanent resident at the beach does, so I think it's only fair. I feel like if you don't count me that that's undemocratic and it's wrong. So please count me. And I'm a schoolteacher—if you don't count me, I'm only going to pay school taxes once, okay, and I have no problem as a schoolteacher paying them twice if you'll let my vote count and keep Victoria Beach the way she is.

And thank you for being so awesome in your job. I thought teaching was hard, yours is twice as hard. It's longer, the hours—well, maybe not, but anyway, thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much for staying with us and thank you for the presentation and good morning, and it's late, so thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Any further questions?

Mr. Ewasko: You know what, I could go into the whole role as far as the teacher thing; I haven't had as long of career as you have in teaching, but—

Floor Comment: How do you know?

Mr. Ewasko: Because she said.

The member from Emerson had asked how come you know, and I—because you said earlier.

But I just want to 'appree'—I just want to say thank you very much for coming to committee, staying this long. And, again, it's because of people like you that things get possibly changed to these crazy bills, so thank you very much.

* (00:50)

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for coming.

I will now call William Charles Kennedy. He is not here. Thank you.

Walter Kleinschmit, private citizen. No?

Florence Eastwood? Florence Eastwood? I don't see—not here.

Marjorie Birley? No?

Robert Lawler?

Bruce Ball? Do you have some papers to distribute?

Mr. Bruce Ball (Private Citizen): No, I don't. Just—I have one page, so it should be brief.

Madam Chairperson: You may begin then.

Mr. Ball: And good morning and—Madam Chairman and members of the Legislature.

My name is Bruce Ball. I live in Winnipeg and we have a cottage in Dunnottar where my wife, Barbara, and I spend five months each summer. This has been our practice for 30 years and that of our parents for another 20 years. The cottage, which is almost a hundred years old, has had only three owners. This, I submit, is typical of cottage life where families, like birds, return each year to the same place at the same time over decades.

The annual renewal of friendships creates a sense of community. This differs from urban and farm life. My position is to encourage the government to amend Bill 33 to allow an exemption for resort communities like Dunnottar and, you've heard, Victoria Beach from having to amalgamate. I have three further points.

The village pays all its expenses and is virtually tax free. As such, there is no charge on the provincial Treasury. Cottagers pay their assessment share of all the village's year-round expenses, including school taxes. The village operates a sewage collection system and a unique effluent treatment where phosphates are recovered.

The village employs six people on a year-round basis and a 'simpler'—similar number on a seasonal—are seasonal employees. The village also shares a number of its operations with adjacent communities, such as sharing fire and emergency services that—and some use our lagoon. Therefore, for financial reasons, our municipal service and the numb—and our

employment, Dunnottar is an efficient and competent operation.

One final thing: our council has elections every four years. Some elections are more lively than others, but the members are accountable and are known and approachable. Holding elections in the summertime is important.

This concludes my presentation. And I have one line commenting that virtually all presenters spoke of their love of their community, and that has been enriching to hear. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much for staying here with us. Good morning. And the reason why we're here, all of us, all political parties included, love Manitoba, try to do the best job we can; we're not perfect. And—but we do appreciate you giving us some advice, and we'll certainly consider it, and we appreciate presentations on behalf of Dunnottar, like yourself and also Victoria Beach, stating the uniqueness of your communities. And we'll certainly consider that when amendments are coming forward. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Bruce, and to your wife behind you there for sticking it out with us tonight. And, again, we hope the minister does listen, and there's a lot—I've enjoyed the passion that people have for their communities. That's what makes Manitoba what it is. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

I will now call David Lewis, private citizen. David Lewis is not here.

That concludes the list of presenters I have—that have been called during tonight's meeting. Since this committee will meet again tomorrow evening, what is the will of the committee?

Mr. Pedersen: May I ask a question first, just of the Clerk's office. Do they phone those people who are not here?

Madam Chairperson: Yes, that's one of the reasons I had to read their names out because—*[interjection]*

Mr. Pedersen, just one moment.

Mr. Pedersen, my understanding is that they were all called and informed that there would be another meeting tomorrow night—so that they were called tonight and they were not here. If they are—

when they are called tomorrow during the meeting and they are not here, then they drop off the list.

Any other questions? Okay.

So, since the committee will meet again tomorrow evening, what is the will of the committee?

An Honourable Member: Committee rise.

Madam Chairperson: Committee rise.

Just before we rise, I'd like to remind all in attendance that only if necessary this committee will also meet to consider this bill on Wednesday, September 11th, at 6 p.m.

Finally, in the interests of saving paper, it would be appreciated if members would leave behind copies of the bill if they do not need them.

The hour being 12:55, committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 12:55 a.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

To the Standing Committee of the Legislature chosen to review Bill 33

I am concerned about the throne speech announcement that the government plans to begin a process of municipal amalgamations.

My mother and I own a cottage and are taxpayers at Victoria Beach. While it is true that Victoria Beach does not meet the 1000 permanent residents requirement, it is clear that the summertime population exceeds that number. As well the taxpayer number exceeds that number. I pay close to the same amount of tax for my teeny uninsulated cottage as I do for my larger River Heights home in Winnipeg.

Victoria Beach is a unique community and should not be joined with the RM of Alexander which is much different. We worry that we will have little representation on council, and that we may be forced to give up our uniqueness, our culture, our restricted driving area, our independence, and perhaps our police service.

From my understanding, we are not the only community opposing amalgamation. I read that a strong majority have written letters of opposition.

I have not seen any information which gives the benefits and advantages of amalgamation, if there are any, or the reasoning behind this decision.

I do not believe that amalgamation with the RM Alexander is necessary or in our best interests.

Sincerely
Pam Gordon
Victoria Beach

* * *

Re: Bill 33 - The Municipal Modernization Act

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the forced inclusion of the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach (hereinafter "RMVB") in an amalgamation with the Rural Municipality of Alexander (hereinafter "RMA").

The Act proposes to force amalgamation upon municipalities with less than 1,000 permanent residents. It does not consider the fiscal viability of the existing municipality. It does not consider the tax base, including seasonal residents. RMVB has a tax base of about 2,600 taxpayers, and is financially sound.

Such an amalgamation would have numerous adverse effects on RMVB:

1. The RMVB would cease to be classified as a Resort Municipality, which would move elections from July to October and thereby effectively disenfranchise the numerous seasonal residents of RMVB who are not at Victoria Beach in October.

2. RMVB maintains a unique culture and environment, including a restricted area that disallows residents' vehicles during the summer months. As a Ward of RMA, Victoria Beach would likely have only one representative on a municipal council of five. Victoria Beach would no longer be master of its own destiny and would not be in a position to protect its unique culture and environment. An amalgamated RMA/RMVB council would be much less motivated to maintain the distinctive character of Victoria Beach.

3. RMVB presently has its own local police force, which provides prompt policing services to the Municipality. Victoria Beach is geographically remote from the main population centers of RMA. In the probable scenario that amalgamation causes RMVB to lose its separate police force, police

response time from a remote location is likely to be severely elongated.

4. Seasonal residents of RMVB are already required to pay substantial education taxes to a school division at which they have no rights to elect trustees and no rights to send their children to school. This is a "taxation without representation" issue, and amalgamation will serve to dilute the voices of the seasonal residents on this issue.

I have observed the results of forced amalgamation in other jurisdictions, and they have generally not produced the results predicted by the governments that forced them.

Please take all the facts into consideration. Amalgamation is not a panacea, and should not be forced upon municipalities that are healthy and sustainable in their present form. In the case of RMVB, amalgamation is likely to permanently damage a unique community, with no compensating benefits to that community.

Yours sincerely,
Gordon Tomlin

* * *

Thursday, May 9, 2013

Attention: Clerk of Committees, re Amalgamation of Municipalities and Bill 33

I am writing to express concern about many points in Bill 33. My biggest concern is this section:

A municipality that consists of an area with fewer than 1,000 residents must – acting jointly with its amalgamation partner or partners as identified under section 4 – prepare an amalgamation plan respecting the amalgamation of the municipality and its partner or partners effective January 1, 2015.

I am a resident of the city of Winnipeg, and a resident of the RM of Victoria Beach. I pay taxes in both places, and am able to vote in both places, and consider the outcomes of both places to be of equal importance to me, because depending on the time of year, I live in both places for extended periods of time, as do many others. In fact, thousands of others (approximately 2600 it's been reported). This is my huge concern that the thousands of property owners who contribute a considerable amount of money to our RM through taxes to Victoria Beach are not being considered in this bill. I am just as much a member of Victoria Beach as someone who lives there year round, because of the taxes I pay. This is

where I find there is a huge flaw in this bill because the truth of how many properties and therefore how much tax money is available to the RM is not being considered, and therefore doesn't seem to make any sense.

Another concern I have is this section:

AND WHEREAS municipalities need to have adequate populations to provide essential infrastructure and services to their citizens;

Raymond Moreau, the former CAO of the RM of Victoria Beach commented in a letter on this issue:

"As you are most likely aware, Victoria Beach is a resort municipality with approximately 2600 taxpayers, a seasonal population ranging from 5000 to 10000 persons and a portioned assessment in excess of 164,000,000. There are only 27 municipalities (including 1 incorporated town) with larger portioned assessments for 2013. It should also be noted that under your government's proposal there are no Manitoba municipalities with 1000 taxpayers (electors) or more, let alone 2600, which will be forced to amalgamate. And despite these facts, your government will force Victoria Beach the 28th largest municipal corporation (in assessment) in Manitoba with over 2600 electors (probably also in the top 30 in Manitoba) to amalgamate yet will allow municipal corporations with 1000 residents (fewer than 1000 electors) to remain intact!!!!"

You see, what I do not understand is this reasoning that is given for why municipalities should amalgamate. The reason itself makes sense, but when I look at the statement above from Mr. Moreau, then the reason does not apply to Victoria Beach, because Victoria Beach is financially able to provide "essential infrastructure and services". Further on in his letter he states:

"In addition to providing its citizens with an outstanding level of service, council had the foresight to proceed with the construction of a state-of-the-art water treatment plant (completed in 2008 for approximately \$3,500,000) with absolutely no funding from Manitoba or Canada."

The following section is interesting:

Public to be consulted 3(3) In developing their amalgamation plan, the municipalities must provide a reasonable opportunity for members of the public to comment on the content of the proposed plan.

It seems that many RMs across the province have tried to comment on the proposed plan of amalgamation for less than 1000 residents (and again, we have more, permanent or not, as I already explained), including a huge majority voting against the idea, but yet the RMs are to seek public opinion? And in fact the public is trying to comment by sending letters and phone calls regarding this amalgamation but there seems to be a lack of desire to respond to the very good points made by taxpayers and municipalities. If letting public comment is important, then please start to consider the very logical reasoning that many people are providing for why this amalgamation plan does not work.

Considerations 5(2) In making a recommendation, the minister is to have regard for

(a) the amalgamation plan submitted by the municipalities in accordance with section 3, if any, including the public comments obtained in the preparation of the plan; and

(b) the relative strength of the community of interest that exists among the municipalities.

Again, the minister needs to start regarding the public's comments.

Effect of amalgamation 8(8) On the effective date of the establishment of a newly amalgamated municipality,

(a) all the rights and property of the municipalities that are amalgamated become the rights and property of the newly amalgamated municipality;

(b) all the debts, obligations and liabilities of the municipalities that are amalgamated become the debts, obligations and liabilities of the newly amalgamated municipality

I have a concern here because our RM and the Government of Manitoba were working together to protect the beaches that are on Crown Lands and Municipal Lands at Victoria Beach in the past 2 years, to find a solution for beach/shoreline protection and management. The RM decided to work with Baird and Associates Coastal Engineers, and have a holistic study done for each of our unique beaches to create solutions that would work. Do any other RMs want to be involved in this important project along with our unique area? What happens to this 2 year project that is ongoing? I was on the Shoreline Advisory Committee and can tell you that there are many, many passionately concerned

members of Victoria Beach that would like to see this project continue.

In conclusion, I request that the Government change the wording of Bill 33 to recognize all taxpayers, and not just permanent residents, if they are suggesting that this Bill needs to occur because municipalities need to be able to provide services. Because there are 2600 taxpayers at Victoria Beach, our RM is doing very well and does not need to be enveloped by another area. Referring to our area only by the 350 year round residents does not represent our area. Please do not force our area to amalgamate. It is a very unique community with special qualities such as no cars in summer that could be put in jeopardy by having to join with any other area, as no other RM has this characteristic.

Regards,
Jennifer Engbrecht

* * *

Att: Standing Committee RE: Bill 33 – The Municipal Modernization Act

My name is Walter Tymchuk and I am a councillor for Ward 1 in the RM of Lawrence. The Reeve and Council for the RM of Lawrence have passed resolutions, sent letters, and signed petitions opposing the intentions of the Province of Manitoba to force municipalities with fewer than 1000 residents to amalgamate. The reasons opposing Bill 33 are many and these same reasons have been expressed by many ratepayers and residents in the RM as well as by the AMM. The reasons are:

1. Unreasonable timelines.

Since the announcement in November, 2012 the timelines established by the Minister are simply unrealistic. The timelines are not only unrealistic but they are confusing as well. Deadline dates have come and gone and they keep changing (i.e) Amalgamation Plan Section 3(1) "prepare amalgamation plan effective January 1, 2015 amalgamation plan to Minister Section 3(4) by December 1, 2013.

I have personally heard of 2 municipalities who have voluntarily amalgamated and the entire process has taken over 7 years and is still ongoing.

2. Elimination of public input.

The majority of the residents in my Ward oppose forced amalgamation. Section 3 (3) states that municipalities must provide a reasonable opportunity

for members of the public to comment on the content of the plan. What plan are they to comment on? The present timelines do not give sufficient time to prepare an appropriate plan or other alternatives.

3. Artificial numbers under 1000 citizens.

The RM of Lawrence has been in existence for nearly 100 years and was planning an 100 year Anniversary in 2014. The majority of citizens are happy with the services, etc. that the municipality has provided and they would wish this to remain. They are the taxpayers in the area and simply to destroy the municipality for the sake of change is not "moving forward". Since the Minister's announcement in November I have collected a binder full of resolutions and letters from other municipalities objecting to forced amalgamation. I also attended the Municipal Officials Seminar in Brandon and witnessed a standing vote where over 95% of the delegates stood up to show their objections to forced amalgamation. I would also urge the Standing Committee to note the results of a similar initiative in Saskatchewan in 2000 where a total of 145 rural municipalities held a referendum on the same issue and 98% of the voters were opposed to forced amalgamation, whereby the government abandoned their plans for amalgamation.

4. The promise that forced amalgamation will cut costs and provide more money for essential infrastructure and improved services to their citizens – I have attended numerous meetings with adjoining municipalities, attended information sessions on the new initiative and have listened to Minister Lemieux regarding the reasons for this forced amalgamation. I have yet to see how this forced amalgamation will be beneficial to my rural residents. Mr. Lemieux during his address at

MOS in Brandon made a lengthy reference to the fact that the demands from citizens have changed in the last few years and he used the example of the demand for more "bicycle paths". Amalgamated municipalities would be in a better position to provide this service however I can assure you that the residents in my municipality do not and will not accept this as a legitimate reason for forced amalgamation.

5. Section 4(1) "neighbouring municipalities must work co-operatively"

I would like the committee to understand that since the introduction of this initiative and Bill 33 that this has now become a double edged sword. Many

municipalities have worked co-operatively with other municipalities in areas of common good to provide essential services. We are a member of a planning district, a veterinary board, library board and a conservation district to name a few.

These "dysfunctional" municipalities that work within a balanced budget have worked co-operatively with surrounding municipalities for their mutual benefit for many years. I am positive that these same municipal elected officials have explored other areas of common interest between municipalities and have determined that their own municipality can best meet the needs of their ratepayers. I do not understand how Mr. Lemieux thinks that 2 municipalities will work co-operatively when 1 municipality has 900 people and another has 400 people. Does he suggest that the newly amalgamated municipality will have equal number of councillors? This may work in theory but we must be realistic. Which municipality will lose its office, lay off employees and close down maintenance shops. This initiative has effectively destroyed this working partnership that municipalities have established to date and will destroy all smaller rural municipalities. In fact in one of our meetings with a neighbouring municipality they suggested that they would like to take one ward from our municipality with the higher assessment and the rest of the municipality could go elsewhere. This is working co-operatively. Detailed amalgamation plans have not been submitted to date because most talks have been very superficial in nature since no elected municipal official is willing to destroy their own municipality.

6. Government unwillingness to examine alternatives.

The AMM has provided various alternatives to this forced amalgamation however this has "fallen on deaf ears". The RM of Lawrence Council has also expressed other alternatives to Minister Lemieux, however the response from the Minister was "not at this time". Does this response mean that it will be considered at some future time? Does Section 9 Exclusion apply to the RM of Lawrence since our northern boundary is shared with Aboriginal and Northern Affairs? More time is required to examine this alternative carefully.

7. Introduction of Bill 33.

Should this Bill not have been introduced prior to the November announcement with the numerous and confusing deadlines? This Bill is only being introduced after the government has realized the

serious objections that have surfaced from the majority of municipalities in the province. By-passing the Municipal Board and simply changing the rules to accommodate the Government's agenda really indicates that the consequences of this initiative were never thoroughly examined.

In summation, as a councillor in a small rural municipality, I feel that this Bill will only serve to destroy all small rural municipalities. The present government has gone to great lengths to suggest that they support "small rural Manitoba" however the passing of this Bill is contradictory to any statements made supporting rural Manitoba. There is no evidence to support the fact that forced amalgamation will lead to an improvement in essential infrastructure and services to small rural municipalities in Manitoba.

I would like to thank the Standing Committee for considering this written submission regarding Bill 33. I believe that the committee will thoroughly consider these concerns as similar concerns have been expressed by all parties opposed to forced amalgamation.

Ward 1 Councillor
Rural Municipality of Lawrence

* * *

Dear sirs:

We own a cottage property at Victoria Beach, 223-7th Ave, and we would like to comment on the above Bill and its possible effects on our Community.

Victoria Beach is a unique community with a large proportion of seasonal residents. The local and seasonal residents appreciate such things as the Resort Municipal classification that allows the Municipality to have their annual meeting in July not October. We also fear loss of control over such issues as the "no car" policy in July and August if we were to only have one Council Representative.

Any benefits of amalgamation can be achieved just as easily through co-operation and working together with the RM of Alexander. This has always been the case and allows our heavily weighted seasonal owners to have a legitimate voice in the operation of the RM of Victoria Beach.

Please do not force this amalgamation on to the RM of Victoria Beach.

Thank you

Glen and Sharon Torgerson

* * *

Please be advised that I object to Bill 33 as it will diminish my democratic voting power if the municipality of Victoria Beach is amalgamated with the RM of Alexander.

The RM of VB has a tax base of over 2000 people who deserve some consideration, not only the 300 or so permanent residents. If only the permanent residents should be considered, then it is not fair to tax the others if they do not have a voice in this restructuring.

The amalgamation will decrease the property values and the subsequent tax base which would negate any savings to anyone from an "efficiency".

This RM is almost 100 years old and has its own distinct culture which will be lost in an amalgamation.

Minister Lemieux had indicated this was to be voluntary, which at least would have been democratic. This has proven to be untrue and totally unacceptable.

I most strongly object to this Bill.

Peter Ingram
Victoria Beach/Winnipeg

* * *

Written Submission In Regards To Bill 33 – The Municipal Modernization Act

I am writing to express my opposition to Bill 33. I am a life long Summer Resident of The R. M. of Victoria Beach whose family has had a connection to the Beach since just after WW1, and a taxpayer in my own right since 1990. As a third generation "VB'er" I have seen many changes that have taken place in our community over the past 70 years. The building of permanent road access, the extension of Manitoba Hydro to the community, the development of a Municipal water system and it's upgrading to Provincial standards, the modernization of the Public Works Department, the establishment of a professional, full time Police Service, and the establishment of a Volunteer Fire Department and First Responders' Program.

These changes were all accomplished with public debate and discussion under the leadership of our Municipal Council and various community

organizations. Some changes were more contentious than others but all were achieved within the guiding principle of maintaining the lifestyle and ambience of our unique community and all those that were solely municipal in scope were funded by the taxpayers of the Beach.

In my time at Victoria Beach the Municipality has grown from some hundreds of residences to some 2600 +. To suggest that there are less 1000 residents, 350 according to the 2011 Census, ignores the fact that another 2250 taxpayers live there a good portion of the year. The use of this arbitrary measure of 1000 permanent residences may be legitimate when considering rural, agricultural municipalities whose neighbouring jurisdictions are similar in composition and land usage but should certainly not be applied to unique resort communities such as ours. This is taking a sledgehammer to a task requiring a thoughtful, delicate and precise procedure. If there are municipalities whose population/tax base cannot maintain the services that their citizens require then their existence as sustainable legal entities can be called into question and on that basis a dialogue take place with their taxpayers as to options for their communities. It would appear reasonable to apply a measure such as economic viability rather than picking an arbitrary number of residents as the basis to decide the fate of healthy, vibrant and self sufficient local governments.

It is my request that a review be made of the criteria being proposed to determine what should constitute a Municipality in Manitoba taking into account these and other concerns and proposals that have been or will be registered.

Respectfully submitted,
John R. Gow
Winnipeg, MB

* * *

To whom it may concern:

subject: Reference to "Bill 33 - The Municipal Modernization Act - New Municipal Amalgamation Legislation".

My wife and I are residence of the Municipality of East St. Paul and have cottage property within the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach. Having resided in East St. Paul since 1973 and having cottage property at Victoria Beach (VB) from 1984; we are familiar with and appreciative of living within a small Municipality. In both Municipalities

we enjoy prompt and efficient services, strong leadership and value for our tax dollar.

In reviewing Bill 33, it would appear that amalgamation is forced upon Municipalities having a minimum permanent population of less than 1000 individuals. While this is not the case in East St. Paul, it will impact Victoria Beach.

As you may know Victoria Beach is unique situation not only in Manitoba, but within Canada itself.

Forced Amalgamation of VB will no doubt erode the summer vehicle restriction, culture, the independence and the uniqueness of this truly wonderful resort community. Our concern also lies with the Municipal employees who provide services such as Policing, road maintenance, parks and recreation, etc.. These dedicated service providers would be lost within a large administration and the services they now provide would no doubt deteriorate.

The minimum criteria of 1000 permanent residence (as stated in Bill 33) seems to be out of place with respect to VB; and is not a proper definition of the Municipalities financial strength and taxation base. I understand the RM of VB has a Municipal electoral base of 2600 individuals. This number of persons and property ownership should warrant a different consideration from the Government in this matter.

We do not wish to lose our community police. The RCMP (no disrespect intended) will not have the time and resources to provide the same level of security. We do not wish to lose the same level of other Municipal service such as road maintenance, and closeness to the local administration that we now enjoy.

The other major concern we have is the way in which this Legislation is being force upon our resort community. The word "Bully" seem to fit the situation. This is not what we have come to expect from our otherwise "people friendly" Provincial Government!

Please give your attention to our concerns and revisit the Legislation as concerns resort communities.

Yours truly,

Ron and Sherill Zellis
East St. Paul, Mb
Victoria Beach Mb

* * *

Re: Bill 33 – The Municipal Modernization Act

We are cottage owners at 316-4th Ave., Victoria Beach and feel that Bill 33 should not apply to the RM of Victoria Beach.

We base this on the fact that the determinant of which municipalities are affected, (i.e.) permanent population under 1000, is flawed in that the R.M. of Victoria Beach has a significant seasonal population who are voters and tax payers. While permanent residents total 350, there are 2500 registered voters and tax payers and a seasonal population of over 4000.

The municipality has a significant tax base of over \$380 million which has allowed it to provide for, in a more than adequate fashion, the needs of its residents, both permanent and seasonal. For example, we are provided with year around police service, weekly garbage pickup, recycling services. We have our own Fire and EMT department which we share with an adjacent municipality with whom we also share a landfill and sewage lagoon both services without the need for amalgamation. It is worth noting that recently \$3.2 million was invested in a new water treatment plant without any support being required from the Provincial government.

If the rationale for Bill 33 was to ensure that a municipality had an adequate population to provide the necessary revenue to fulfill its obligations, it appears to us that the R.M. of Victoria Beach, because of its large seasonal population, can and has fulfilled its obligations without the need for amalgamation.

Another unfair aspect of Bill 33 is the removing of the designation of our municipality as a Resort Municipality which results in our elections being moved to October from July when seasonal residents who make up 85% of the electorate are better able to exercise their voting rights.

In conclusion, we feel that our municipality is providing both the permanent and the seasonal residents with the necessary infrastructure and services and that the uniqueness of Victoria Beach, with its car restricted area and sense of community, will be lost in an unnecessary amalgamation where our ability to maintain that uniqueness will be seriously constrained.

Dick & Elaine Archer

* * *

Re: bill 33-The Municipal Modernization Act

I am writing as a concerned tax payer in the Municipality of Victoria Beach. Apparently some 2600 of us, as tax payers do not count as members of the Municipality. If we were to become part of a much bigger Municipality, we would have a greatly reduced voice in the running of our local affairs. As a resort municipality some of our features are quite unique and it is that which makes it the special place that it is. We worry that, over time, we would lose our uniqueness and independence and a very small voice.

A concerned constituent, Elizabeth Deacon

* * *

Rural Municipality Of Harrison

May 13, 2013

Standing Committee – Bill 33 –The Municipal Modernization Act

Dear Members:

We are writing to oppose Bill 33 as presented to the legislature on May 01, 2013.

We are not opposed to amalgamation if it is the will of the municipality and its residents. We object to the forced nature of this legislation and the unreasonable time lines proposed.

The R.M. Of Harrison is in a strong financial position and the wants and needs of our ratepayers are well met. 156 letters opposing this legislation were sent from these ratepayers to the Minister of Local Government and the Premier.

The minimum population of 1000 residents is of particular concern to us. As of the last census, (if one can depend on its accuracy), the R.M. of Harrison's population was 864. Sandy Lake is within our boundary and creates a huge tourist industry. These 300 cottagers put our electors list to almost 1200. These additional ratepayers are some of the highest assessed properties in our municipality. Their needs from our budget dollars and our time are certainly as demanding as any other taxpayer. How can these people not be part of the equation? Should they not be considered in this legislation?

The Department of Local Government has stated they have allocated consultants and aid for the implementation of this forced amalgamation. However, it is the municipal tax dollars that are going to have to pay for the time and

application of amalgamating. The costs accumulated by Councillors time and administration and legal work will be immeasurable and is highly unjust when it is not our wish to do so!

Another concern is how a Council can continue to successfully represent what would be a much larger geographical area. If this bill was to pass as presented, it is very feasible that new municipalities could be in excess of 2000 square miles. This is not like governing the cities of Manitoba. One must consider the mileage to cover, the individual communities' needs, and the diversity of infrastructure. Fear of losing their neighborhood's uniqueness is a genuine concern for our citizens. Human nature will obviously pit community against community in a much larger municipality. Again, it is not like a city with more common issues and interests.

The most disconcerting part of Bill 33 for our Council is the complete disregard for our ratepayers' say in this decision. Not consulting the people who have elected all politicians in this province is an unforgiveable insult. This is not the platform our Council ran on in 2010, nor do we see ourselves as that kind of candidates for the future.

Aside from withdrawing Bill 33 altogether, we have several suggestions to amend or altar this legislation:

- The Department of Local Government should be satisfied with the municipalities it has convinced to amalgamate and encourage them to become role models for others in the future who CHOOSE to do so.
- Municipalities should be examined on an individual basis as to their fiscal standing and how they are currently serving their residents.
- The prerequisite of municipalities being formed by census population of minimum 1000 should instead be changed to consider the number of ratepayers in a given municipality.
- The expense of a forced amalgamation should be allocated from the Provincial purse – perhaps allotted on a per capita basis.
- To respect our ratepayers, Bill 33 be taken to the public in a referendum as part of the Municipal Election of October 2014.

Again, we are not opposed to amalgamation for those who want it. However, the reasons given above are why we oppose Bill 33 as currently introduced.

We sincerely hope our words will be considered in your deliberating process. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

For the Rural Municipality Of Harrison

Murray Davies
Reeve

Doreen Stapleton
Deputy Reeve

* * *

As a summer resident of Victoria Beach I am opposed to a possible amalgamation of our municipality with R.M. of Alexander because although we have less than 1000 permanent residences the summer residences pay most of the taxes.

We do not want to loose our identity as a unique place and we want to be able by voting to express what we want.

Our needs may not be recognized in a larger municipality.

Donna Thain

* * *

May 8, 2013

Dear Committee,

Re: Bill 33, Forced amalgamation of select rural municipalities

I am writing to you today to voice my strong objections to the forced amalgamations of rural municipalities with permanent resident populations under 1000.

I own a family cottage at Victoria Beach. It is well used each the summer by four generations of our family. I have always voted in our municipal elections and have been a regular attendee of the summer Council meetings held in the R.M. of Victoria Beach. I served for many years on the Board of the Victoria Beach Community Club. I was raised spending my summers at that cottage and my children and now my grandchildren are privileged to have the same experience. I am quite knowledgeable on the culture of our unique community and the operations of our Council.

Victoria Beach is, as anyone who has been there or who knows someone who has been there, very unusual. With the exception of business vehicles and our taxi service, we do not allow vehicular traffic in the restricted area of our Municipality. We get around on foot or by bicycle. This vehicular restriction is by an order of the Manitoba Legislature many decades ago. We are non-commercial, with just a small grocery store, a bakery, and our Moonlight Inn restaurant operating in the restricted area. We want no more commerce than that; we love to escape from that world for the summers. We have an active Community Club that provides many recreational and social opportunities for children and adults. For 2 months we 'escape' into the past and do without a lot of outside influences.

However, thanks to wise decisions by our various elected council members over the years, we do have services that some other resort municipalities may not. We have electricity and potable running water from a state of the art water treatment facility. We have well maintained roads, a police service, volunteer fire department, and paramedic service. We also have central recycling collection and, what is even more unusual in a resort community, weekly garbage collection from our individual properties.

Our Councils over the years have managed to do all this, provide all this service and yet maintain a quiet, non-commercial atmosphere and remain financially viable at the same time. We property owners, permanent and seasonal alike, have paid for these services through our taxes.

I understand that this forced amalgamation is being brought to bear on municipalities with fewer than 1000 residents. Although the R.M. of Victoria Beach has fewer than 1000 who live there all year round, we have more than 2600 taxpayers. We all pay fairly high taxes for the privilege of owning a residence in this unique community. We "summer folk" are just as involved and interested in the affairs of the R.M. as the year round residents. As seasonal residents we pay taxes, including school tax, in the same fashion as our neighbours who are year round residents. Why are we excluded from the count that determines the necessity to amalgamate?

If this forced amalgamation takes place, one of my first concerns would be that we would lose our unique atmosphere. It is that that makes Victoria Beach so valuable to our family and that of many other families. We would become only a part of a Ward and will have minor representation on

an amalgamated council. Decisions made by that Council would be less likely to be in the best interests of the Victoria Beach community. Currently we have a resort Municipality classification and our elections are held in July when the vast majority of voters reach a polling station via a short bicycle ride! If enforced amalgamation goes ahead, this classification would no longer be in effect and our elections would be held in the amalgamated R.M. in October. This would mean that the large majority of our voters would have to travel quite some distance to exercise their right to vote. And an election in October, when the majority of the residents of our area have closed up their cottages and returned to their winter jobs and activities, is not front and centre stage in our lives. In an age when voter turnout to the polls is a concern, this seems like a backwards step.

One of the biggest fear would be to lose our vehicle restricted area. This is the primary factor in making our area unique. It would have little importance to an amalgamated Council on which only one member is from Victoria Beach area. Removing this vehicular restriction or allowing it to be slowly eroded would absolutely destroy this area.

If this proposed amalgamation was voluntary, it would be an entirely different matter. In that case, it would mean that those municipalities requesting it both needed and wanted to amalgamate for their own reasons. One would hope that the province would then assist those municipalities in achieving that goal. But to force it upon municipalities who clearly do not want it or need it is beyond reason. I cannot understand what good could possibly come of such an action. And to have it enforced so rapidly, without reasonable time for public input through the Municipal Board, seems to be rather undemocratic. I wonder why the rush? Why the amalgamation? Our R.M. is quite sustainable as is!

Should it not be sustainability, rather than an arbitrary permanent population number based on the voluntary 2011 Census, that is the deciding factor in a proposed amalgamation?

There are many Manitoba voters who are very displeased with this decision.

Sincerely,
Marjorie Birley

* * *

May 14,2013

Re Bill 33:

We are cottage owners in the RM of Victoria Beach. Our family has owned our cottage for over 70 years.

We are very much against Bill 33 which is forcing municipalities to amalgamate. Your government should do an in-depth study of the municipalities concerned. Even though the (flawed) short census showed @ 350 permanent residents in our RM, no consideration was given to the 2600 summer residents who pay a large share of taxes.

RM of Victoria Beach is a strong, viable & independent community as it stands today. Give us your reasoning why amalgamation with another RM is to our benefit. Perhaps it is to your government's benefit solely. Why would one break something that is strong & independent???

Our community is a very unique community & people come from every location on the globe to enjoy this experience. If amalgamation were to happen as your government has planned, we are afraid all this would be lost.

Once again our NDP government is forcing issues on its residents without looking at it more closely, Once again the NDP government is getting a huge black mark which will eventually play itself out at the next poles. Shame on your government!!!!!!

Yours truly,
Graham & Allison Bloomer
Victoria Beach

* * *

Sirs: I am totally opposed to the Bill which will cover the above Amalgamation. We at Victoria Beach have a totally unique community. Although we may not have 1,000 residents in the winter we have a tax base of over 2,000 in the summer. We are financially viable. We have many amenities which could be lost or destroyed. We have a wonderful Police Dept. Fire Dept. First Responders Group, great Public Works Dept., Water system, terrific summer programs for all ages, every evening for children, through our Recreation organization, tennis courts and a beautiful little golf course. Last but not least the restriction of vehicular traffic from June to September is very unique and keeps our children safe. Please consider all these points and do not for one more minute consider the above amalgamation.

Joyce Ramsay
Victoria Beach

* * *

To Whom It May Concern

Please do not amalgamate the Village of Dunnottar. It is a special magical place. I have been going there since I was a child. I'm a senior now. My sister & I share a cottage there. We love it just the way it is. Everything it needs is already in place.

Thank you for your consideration.

Fran Allary

* * *

Bill 33 Submissions – Standing Committee

My family have been summer residents of Victoria Beach since the 1930's. We have paid yearly municipal and school taxes equivalent to permanent residents. We have paid local improvement taxes to fund a new seasonal grocery store and a modern water treatment plant. We have volunteered hundreds of hours to upgrade the tennis courts (6 hard courts) and support the Victoria Beach Community Club in their many endeavors. Recently we have watched the growth and success of the Senior's Scene building and programs. Now we watch in eager anticipation as the new Victoria Beach Sports Club is being built which will have curling, meeting places, offices and social hall as some of its features. As summer residents we have an excellent police force that has trained many aspiring police officers, curbside garbage removal, yearly road maintenance, winter snow clearing, summer lawn care and gardens, flood protection when necessary, shoreline maintenance and many more.

We are a unique municipality as you are probably aware. We do not allow vehicular traffic in the summer months. As summer residents we pay to keep our cars parked in a parking lot in order to preserve the restricted area and keep it safe for everyone. We enjoy commuting on bicycles or walking. Our grocery store, bakery, and restaurant are leased by the municipality to tenants. There are no privately owned commercial buildings. In Victoria Beach, you cannot purchase liquor. Through membership fees we support the Victoria Beach Community Club which has a weekly newsletter. The Club also offers swim lessons, movies, tennis and golf lessons, crafts etc. We hire a Recreation Director for the summer season and also hire local teenagers to assist with the programs thus providing summer employment for many students. We maintain a community club building and have done so since the 1920's. Our municipal golf course is 90 years old. These are some of the

things that make Victoria Beach unique to my family and which we passionately wish to protect.

Amalgamation with the larger district of Alexander is not acceptable. Financially, mostly through taxes, we support our public works, police and fire, sports and social programs and the buildings they occupy. We face the threat of losing our identity in a larger municipality. Our Reeve and Council work hard to protect what is special about Victoria Beach. With amalgamation, we will have one member on council – how will the special aspects of Victoria Beach be protected with one vote among many. We have never asked for outside assistance in the ongoing running of our municipality, we support our Reeve and Council in their opposition to amalgamation.

Please do not force amalgamation on Victoria Beach. We are small, unique, and financially solvent. As the saying goes "why reinvent the wheel when it ain't broke!!!"

Sally Lawler
Summer Resident, Victoria Beach
Winnipeg
Victoria Beach

* * *

Rural Municipality of Lawrence

May 21, 2013

Attention: Standing Committee Bill 33 – The Municipal Modernization Act

We are writing to voice our opposition to Bill 33 which was introduced in the Legislative Assembly on May 1, 2013. This bill will directly impact our municipality as we currently have a population of less than 1,000. In order to meet this artificial number of a 1,000 we will be forced to amalgamate with one of our bordering neighbors.

The Rural Municipality of Lawrence has been in existence since 1914 and we will be celebrating our 100th Anniversary next year. Our municipality has functioned effectively and efficiently for the past 100 years and we would like to continue to do so for another 100 years. We are PSAB compliant and have always filed our annual budgets and audited financial statements as required and do not consider ourselves to be dysfunctional nor do our residents.

While we have no issues with any of the surrounding municipalities neither have we had any plans to amalgamate with them prior to the announcement regarding amalgamation made back in November 2012. With the exception of our planning district we do not share any other services such as a fire department or recreation services with our neighboring municipalities as it is simply not feasible due to the considerable size of the municipalities in question. Should we be forced to amalgamate there will certainly be a loss of service, convenience and employment to residents due to the distances involved. While we can see the possible benefit of a town and surrounding municipality amalgamating it simply does not make sense in our situation and we would imagine that many other municipalities find themselves in a similar predicament.

As well, we have great issue with the unreasonable deadlines that are outlined in Bill 33. The council of the Rural Municipality of Lawrence takes the amalgamation process very seriously and feels that an amalgamation deadline of January 1, 2014 simply does not allow for adequate and thorough study of all aspects that must be addressed.

We wish to have sufficient time to consult with our residents as there are several possible partners to consider and we need to be respectful of their opinions and requests. We do not want to be hurried through this process and make unwise decisions that may have impact for years to come.

We take pride in our small rural roots and feel that they have served us well for many years and will continue to do so. Bigger is not always better. We thank the Standing Committee for their consideration of our concerns regarding Bill 33 and are hopeful that it will be defeated and the choice to amalgamate will be put back into the hands of the municipalities where it belongs.

Sincerely,
Rural Municipality of Lawrence
Donna Ainscough, CAO
for
Fred Taylor
Reeve
FT/da

* * *

The Reeve and Council of the Rural Municipality of Cameron are pleased to take this opportunity to make this written submission to Committee on Bill 33, "The Municipal Modernization Act."

It is very unfortunate that the Province has chosen the month of May to solicit submissions on this Bill. It has profound implications for rural Manitoba and this is well known to be one of the busiest seasons for agricultural producers. The opportunity to present can only suffer as a result.

It is well known and acknowledged that there are a number of cases where the synergies exist for municipalities to come together and benefit from amalgamation. There has long been a process for doing so and municipalities have and would continue to avail themselves of this process on their own initiative. However this process of application to the Municipal Board has always required, for approval, demonstration of logical reasoning for the proposed amalgamation along with substantial evidence of consensus for and approval of the proposal from the relevant ratepayers. It is interesting to note that in the proposed Act, Bill 33, the "Minister may refer matters to the board," but not the relevant municipalities. Just like that, with a stroke of the pen, not only the requirement but the right for consensus on the matter is extinguished. The removal of rights to local self-determination is not something that Manitobans are used to or are prepared to take lightly. This legislation would also make it very easy, in future, to adjust the 1000 population requirement upwards and start this process over again, to which the Minister has already made casual reference.

It is equally well known and should be acknowledged that there are many examples where the necessary synergies for a successful amalgamation do not exist and such "shotgun weddings" can only be recipes for disaster.

The Province, to date, has failed to provide any compelling or even plausible justification for this agenda. So many of the arguments put forward early on have been thoroughly debunked by many municipalities and most municipal councils have taken serious umbrage at their use. While many of these early arguments have been withdrawn, one that still receives serious traction, is the notion that notable cost savings would inevitably result from amalgamations.

In his May 1 announcement, Minister Lemieux stated that, "Through amalgamation, municipalities would be more efficient, which means more money invested into the services families count on." It cannot be stressed enough that that has not been the normal result of amalgamations either in this

province or in other jurisdictions. Manitoba municipalities that have amalgamated have found good reasons for doing so but have stated that cost savings were neither the expectation nor the result.

Robert L. Bish, Professor Emeritus at the University of Victoria wrote in a C.D. Howe Institute Commentary that, "An extensive review of scholarly research since the 1960's demonstrates that the background assumption that smaller and more numerous jurisdictions provide services at high cost is typically wrong." The main conclusion of this publication is that, "Amalgamations forced on municipalities by provincial governments are the product of flawed nineteenth century thinking and a bureaucratic urge for centralized control." This makes the title "The Municipal Modernization Act", appear a misnomer. Let's call a spade a spade. It's the "Forced Amalgamation Act."

In the late 1990's Ontario's Harris government, as part of its "Common Sense Revolution," forced the amalgamation of a large number of its municipalities, reducing the number from 815 to 445. Very few jurisdictions experienced cost savings. For the vast majority, their costs went up.

Masters Student Ajay Sharma, in his Masters Thesis entitled *The Paradox of Amalgamation: An Analysis of Municipal Restructuring in Ontario*, intensively studied the Ontario experience (143 pages), trying to answer the question, "In light of the empirical evidence that demonstrates that the perceived benefits of municipal consolidation are difficult to attain, why did the government of Ontario choose to amalgamate municipal governments in an attempt to create a more cost-effective system of municipal governance?" Among his conclusions are the following:

"Political ideology acted as an information shortcut."

"Relevant policymakers did not possess the necessary expertise to impose legislative and structural changes" and "by not sufficiently engaging experts at the municipal level, policymakers placed themselves in a significant knowledge deficit problem."

and

"There is a large volume of scholarly work which reaches the conclusion that municipal consolidation does not generate substantive cost savings."

When forced municipal amalgamations were attempted in Saskatchewan, the provincial government came to the conclusion that it could not win elections without rural support and the initiative was dropped. Yet this is the exact agenda that the Government of Manitoba has pursued blindly since the Speech from the Throne. It has apparently concluded that it does not need rural support to win elections. If urban voters were to better understand this issue, the results would be different.

If this hidden agenda had been revealed during the last provincial election campaign, there can be no doubt that this regime would not now hold the reins of power. This hardly constitutes a strong moral mandate for this initiative. The non-partisan nature of municipal governance requires a productive and respectful relationship between municipalities and the provincial government, regardless of party stripe. Whether or not this initiative was Minister Lemieux's own, no predecessor in his portfolio so poisoned the relationship between the two orders of government he was appointed to serve. His legacy is secure. He has alienated his party's core supporters.

We are pleased to see a requirement in the proposed Act for evidence of consultation with ratepayers. But we are curious to know if the resulting body of opinion, if it is not consistent with the intent of the Act, will carry any more weight than similar opinions of council. Our opinions were forwarded to the Minister in the form of legally passed resolutions that were entirely consistent with the existing legislation. Receipt of our resolutions was never acknowledged. We have always acted on behalf of and in consultation with our ratepayers. Why would the province now call for such consultation with no intention to heed the results unless complimentary to their initiative?

In conclusion, the Reeve, the Council and the ratepayers of the Municipality of Cameron wish to hereby register our vehement opposition to the implementation of this unfortunate and most undemocratic piece of proposed legislation, Bill 33.

Brad Coe
Rural Municipality of Cameron

May 22, 2013

Regarding: Written Submission to Bill 33: The Municipal Modernization Act (Municipal Amalgamations)

The Rural Municipality of Dauphin would like to present their objections to Bill 33: The Municipal Modernization Act (Municipal Amalgamations).

Council is opposed to forced municipal amalgamations and feel that amalgamation should be voluntary and with the approval of municipal citizens. Amalgamation may be beneficial to many municipalities and Council supports them in their endeavor to amalgamate, if that is their choice.

Council is also opposed to the 1,000 population limit under the proposed Act. Many municipalities under the 1,000 population are viable and operate very efficiently and cost effectively and provide all services to their citizens that they expect and require. We believe that 1,000 is not a magic number that works across the Province. In some cases, there are likely municipalities over the 1,000 limit that have issues as well as those under the limit. In these cases amalgamation may be the answer and the Province should focus on these municipalities and work with them through the process. The government should not determine who is "viable" and who is not based on a population number. The government should be taking into consideration financial position, non-compliance with government programs like PSAB, or unstable operations; using these issues would justify the requirement of amalgamation more than a population threshold.

Amalgamating two or more municipalities because of population base will create more problems for the municipalities. Vast size alone will create issues that staff and council will face daily. Our municipality is above the threshold, but all our neighbors are below. In our circumstance, if we were to amalgamate with one of our neighbors we would go from approximately 560 square miles to as high as 950 and could be managing staff located anywhere from 16 to 60 miles away. This would be a huge municipality. Yes, daily contact can still be made, but how effective is it? Supervision of staff would be a major obstacle. Travelling time for inspections and attending meetings will cost the municipality a great deal more money. Citizens would not have the close contact that they have now with their council. As it is now, if a citizen has a concern they call the office or

just pick up the phone and call their councilor or meet him on the street (in many cases, their neighbor and friend). As we get larger we get further from the people; the citizens will feel detached and disassociated from their local government without someone they know to call when the need arises.

Amalgamation will not solve infrastructure problems. Two municipalities amalgamating will still have two projects that need to be completed. The same money will still need to be raised from the same people to pay for it and instead of both applying for funding will now have to determine which of the two gets done and which one doesn't because we all know that a municipality does not receive funding for more than one project at a time under any grant application. The people will suffer in the long run as they wait for their projects to get completed in the very long list of infrastructure demands that all municipalities have.

Proposed amalgamations will impose additional financial strains on municipalities; costs will be incurred to combine the bylaws, agreements, and union contracts to name a few. The only savings that we can see is in fewer councilors (who will be charging more time and travel attending meetings and inspections). We cannot see that there would be any savings in staff; the work still needs to get done, however the added work and responsibilities will strain staff and elected officials alike. There would be an opportunity for office staff to specialize but different municipalities bring different issues and the staff in the separate offices knows best how to deal with their present challenges. Not all municipalities are the same; some have cemeteries, beaches, L.U.D.'s, hamlets, pipelines, utilities, etc. while others do not.

Many municipalities have a justified concern with amalgamation with the potential loss of community. Where it is determined that only one office is necessary, the small rural towns will suffer a great loss and a potential loss of the whole community. Our small rural villages are having difficulties surviving now; take away the municipal office, the job loss and loss of income to the post office; it will not be long before the post offices, stores, hotels and schools shutdown too. This is what the people do not want to see – the loss of their community.

The Rural Municipality of Dauphin believes strongly that local municipal governments are a very efficient

level of government that provide effective, quality service to their citizens at the lowest rate of taxes possible using local people, local contractors and local businesses. Municipalities have maintained their sustainability by working cooperatively with their neighboring municipalities to provide services such as fire protection, weed control, conservation districts, planning districts, recreation, recycling, libraries, utilities and waste disposal sites. They remain independent with their own differences and provide for the needs of their citizens in the most effective way possible.

We thank you for your consideration of our presentation and encourage the committee to listen to the people of the rural communities who will be most affected by Bill 33 and ask that the present government reexamine their position of mandatory amalgamations.

Respectfully,

Dennis Forbes, Reeve
Rural Municipality of Dauphin

* * *

Re: Bill 33

Municipal Modernization Act.

Please register my total No vote to Bill 33. I am a Victoria Beach taxpayer, permanent resident since 1998.

I strongly oppose this "Modernization Act."

Yours truly,

Beverley Underhill

* * *

To Whom It May Concern:

The Rural Municipality of Argyle is thankful for the opportunity to express our concerns on Bill 33, the forced amalgamation of municipalities.

The Rural Municipality of Argyle's population is over the 1000 person number and so are currently not in the position of being forced to amalgamate. Our concerns are for the municipalities under that number at this time as well as what the governments future intentions are as we have clearly seen what has happened to the Regional Health Authorities and realize that this government sees "Bigger as better".

Premier Selinger has indicated on more than one occasion that the municipalities are the grassroots of this province and that they should be consulted on any major changes that affect them and their ability to function. We were never contacted prior to the government's announcement of the forced amalgamation of municipalities at the 2012 AMM annual convention. Since this announcement, Minister Lemieux has attended meetings with the municipalities and has indicated that amalgamations are going ahead no matter what we have to say. This is a clear indication that the government is not listening or caring how the municipalities feel about this decision.

Minister Lemieux has stated the small municipalities are dysfunctional. How he came up with this assumption is unclear as all municipalities are audited annually and must have a balanced budget, contrary to our senior level of government.

As previously mentioned, the Rural Municipality of Argyle is not being forced to amalgamate at this time, but it is still going to cost us money for the following reason. We currently shares several services with surrounding municipalities and some of these municipalities are being forced to amalgamate. The Planning District, the Recreation District and Weed District are just some of the examples of services we share with other municipalities. These service districts will have to be reworked as each of these services are shared with different municipalities. This comes with a hefty cost for each municipality involved. The Government uses the sharing of services as a reason to force amalgamation and the question becomes, "Does the government not realize that municipalities are already very good at sharing services and getting the best use of every dollar they spend?"

We, as a rural municipality, are not opposed to amalgamation if it is voluntary and the municipalities involved can see the benefit in doing it. It should be done on each municipalities own initiative and on their terms and their timelines. Minister Lemieux has a different approach and feels amalgamation should be forced on the government's initiative, on the government's terms and on the government's timelines.

With the forced amalgamation to form larger municipalities, we will undoubtedly loose local representatives and quality, dedicated municipal personnel. This is just the opposite of what the

government is stating will be a benefit of amalgamation. The ratepayers should be the ones that ask for amalgamation if they feel that their municipality is inefficient.

Thank you for your time and I ask that the government really listen to the presentations on this bill.

Bob Conibear, Reeve
Rural Municipality of Argyle
CB/bb

* * *

We are writing to declare our opposition to Bill 33, the Municipal Modernization Act. We, the RM of Victoria Beach, are presently a strong and viable community, having our own excellent, well trained police force and fire dept.! The RM of Victoria Beach has a uniqueness of culture and independence. Our restricted area is a good example and could be lost to us if forced to amalgamate.

We have a tax base of 2600 tax payers-well over the 1,000 figure, but not taken into consideration. Why not? Also, the original 1,000 figure was set up for new municipalities being created only. Now, suddenly, it is being applied to all existing municipalities. Why? Why has nothing come forward spelling out specifically, what are the advantages and money savings, of doing this?

Victoria Beach presently holds their elections in July so all property owners can be here to vote. October is no good!!

We are extremely satisfied with our present Victoria Beach Municipality and can see no advantage in amalgamating with another RM.

Please reconsider your actions in this regard!

Yours truly

Ab and Betty Hansford

* * *

Dear Standing Committee Members,

We are writing today to express our opposition to the forced amalgamation of the RM of Victoria Beach with the RM of Alexander. We own a cottage at Victoria Beach which has been in the family for over 50 years. As such, we have a personal investment in this community and a firsthand understanding of the local issues.

When one looks at a map, amalgamation appears to make sense. However, the map alone does not tell the whole story.

Amalgamation is an excellent idea for adjacent regions containing similar demographics of property owners with common needs and goals. This description does not apply to the RMs of Victoria Beach and Alexander. These two municipalities have diverse needs and goals.

Victoria Beach maintains its own police service – an essential need considering its geographical isolation. VB embraces an anti-development, non-commercialized philosophy in a resort community which in the summer prohibits the use of motor vehicles on its streets in the "restricted area". VB is currently engaged in a thorough process of examination and consultation to investigate possible solutions to a beach erosion issue which has generated much concern, controversy, and many varied opinions among the stakeholders.

It is hard to imagine a single council being able to come to terms with and deal satisfactorily with the issues facing Victoria Beach today, while providing equally responsible leadership for the issues in Alexander.

Victoria Beach may only lay claim to 374 permanent residents, but has over 2,500 taxpayers. As such, it has a much larger tax base than any other municipality that is being compelled to amalgamate, as well as many RMs that are not being asked to amalgamate! Furthermore, unlike other RMs who struggle financially, Victoria Beach always has been and always will be financially self-sufficient.

Victoria Beach has many unique qualities shared by no other community in the province, unique qualities which the taxpayers expect, and which the council protects.

Of primary concern is the potential loss of our local Police force. Resort communities everywhere grapple with overexuberant vacationers and misguided youth, not to mention the potential for property damage and loss in the off-season. The local VB Police provide a friendly and effective presence, responding within minutes to trouble calls, and more importantly, patrolling proactively in the community, including in the winter when many cottages are vacant.

We mean no disrespect to the RCMP, but it is simply not possible for a distant RCMP detachment with limited manpower, in the large geographical area of

the RM of Alexander, to provide the level of service our geographically isolated peninsular community currently receives from our local police force. If we were to lose the VB Police, we would lose a vital part of our community: its safety and peace.

We would also like to point out that there is already a great deal of discontent among cottage owners who do not see why we must pay Education Tax for properties in a school division where we have no voting rights to elect trustees. There is a tax revolt brewing already, named "no taxation without representation", and it would be foolhardy to imagine that a forced amalgamation would do any other than pour gasoline on that fire.

If the Minister of Rural Municipalities has any doubts that VB taxpayers are largely opposed to amalgamation, he need only strike a referendum to find out!

Sincerely,

Liz and Kenn Olson

* * *

Dear Sirs,

The writer is opposed to the Province of Manitoba forcing municipalities with fewer than 1000 residents to amalgamate. In particular I am opposed to this legislation as the R.M. of Victoria Beach will be required to amalgamate, thereby losing its unique character which residents, both permanent and seasonal, have cultivated for many years.

The choice of 1000 permanent residents is arbitrary and inappropriate. The R.M. of Victoria Beach has approximately 2600 taxpayers and will be forced to amalgamate. Others with 1000 residents and taxpayers will not. It makes no sense.

In addition, Bill 33 ignores the unique right of the R.M. of Victoria Beach to regulate traffic within the municipality, which right is the subject matter of a special act of the Legislature of Manitoba.

Please record my objection to Bill 33.

E. Ross Yarnell

* * *

To: Clerk of Committees

I am writing to you today to express my concerns about Bill 33, and to that end, the amalgamation of the RM of Alexander and the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach.

Let me start by saying that I am not a local resident of the RM of Victoria Beach, nor am I a cottage owner. What I am though is a cottage renter, who as a child and now an adult spends many of my summer holidays at Victoria Beach. The people of this friendly, tight knit community have always been an integral part of my life and remain so today.

Victoria Beach and its unique atmosphere that includes the no vehicular access policy during the summer months, and the year round, friendly police service, who are quick to respond in an emergency or just to visit with you in the parking lot, are just two examples of the many reasons I choose to return each year. The many beaches where families gather everyday because they have a "favorite spot" are just a five minute walk down the road. The "Town" bakery and store offer up conversations from residents standing in line to order cookies or just grab a movie on a rainy day. People come from surrounding communities just to see the community where time has stopped. Where walking and biking is the only way to get around. Where getting up early to get the best place on the pier to fish and where people say "hello" to perfect strangers because that's the way it's always been.

I am very concerned that this way of life will all change with the proposed amalgamation. I have read many letters online from the people who pay the school taxes and yet don't use the schools. Letters from cottage owners who feel they should certainly have a say, but don't. Letters from concerned renters who feel the community will certainly change and perhaps decide to stay somewhere else for the summer months.

It's because Victoria Beach means so much, to so many people, that I am appealing to you and your government to listen. Please do not go ahead with amalgamation without consulting and listening to your constituents. I have every faith that I will hear from you soon, and that you will have some dates to share with me that will give me the opportunity, as well as many others, to speak to this proposed bill.

Cathy Haining

* * *

This is my written submission opposing Bill 33.

We are fourth generation at Victoria Beach, restricted area and strongly oppose Bill 33.

This amalgamation would cause changes to the uniqueness of Victoria Beach.

Most Sincerely,

Mary Andres

* * *

We are vehemently opposed to the amalgamation to the Province of Manitoba forcing the municipality of Victoria Beach with the RM of Alexander.

Our tax base of over 1000 tax payers was not taken into consideration.

We have a very unique summer vacation area. This is the only such resort area in all of Canada where no cars are allowed to circulate during the July and August! Why would the provincial government want to bring change to this beloved resort where people with families come to enjoy nature and relax? It makes for summer residents to have a healthy life style and this should be encouraged by our provincial government.

We hope this decision will be reconsidered and allow Victoria Beach to remain an idyllic vacation spot in Manitoba

Jeannette and Marcel Charbonneau

* * *

Regarding: Bill 33 The Municipal Modernization Act

This letter is being written on behalf of the undersigned to express our anger and disappointment with the NDP Government of Manitoba's proposed forced amalgamation of rural municipalities. As property owners in the RM of Victoria Beach, we object to being bullied by this government, which is arrogantly imposing its wishes on the population of this province despite any clearly expressed rationale for its actions, or opportunity for public consultation.

Victoria Beach is a community unique to all of Canada, with a thriving electoral base of 2600 people and a resulting tax base of more than 380 million dollars. To be labeled by this Government as dysfunctional and financially irresponsible is both disrespectful and insulting to Manitobans who

identify with and value the heritage of their community. These residents, both seasonal and permanent, deserve to have their voices heard and their interests represented by their own municipal council which reflects the identity of this unique municipality.

One person on a council of four members representing an amalgamated municipality cannot adequately represent the wishes of the over 4000 people who populate the RM of Victoria Beach during the summer months. These include the cottagers who provide 87% of the tax revenues of the existing municipality. Their tax dollars pay for, among many other benefits, the local police force, fire protection, our own local water supply, not to mention our golf course and our seasonal parking lot. Tax monies, distributed throughout an amalgamated municipality, will become diluted. The voice of one representative from VB may be easily overcome by those of three additional councilors, thus putting at risk the amenities which have attracted cottage owners to Victoria Beach for over 100 years.

No evidence has been provided that the delivery of municipal services in the RM of VB has been inefficient or ineffective, nor has the Municipality been shown to be a drain on the province's finances. In addition, no evidence has been given by the NDP government, that the enforced amalgamation of municipalities, regardless of their current effectiveness, will result in either cost savings to residents or an improvement in the quality of life of its property owners.

For these reasons we express our opposition to the arbitrary amalgamation of municipalities in Manitoba, and request that the RM of Victoria Beach be excluded from amalgamation as proposed by Bill 33, The Municipal Modernization Act, currently before the Manitoba Legislature.

Yours truly,

Frances and Jim Woolison

* * *

To whom it may concern re the amalgamation of Victoria Beach.

I am a cottage owner on Lake Winnipeg and I have long known about the historic position of Victoria Beach in the history of the province. It is a place of cohesiveness, traditions and family reunions. The

amalgamation with the larger RM of Alexander seems to be perhaps an organizational/financial decision to gain more control and create divisiveness.

Vic Beach has developed a unified community built on the backs of many families who have owned land there for generations. They meet, they actually talk face to face, and they help each other! Why change that? History should count more in these too modern days where personal contact takes place via electronic apps and long distance impersonal contact rules supreme. The sense of community should be fostered not scrapped.

They have organized their own policing system. Good for them! I am aware of other cottage groups in other RMs where their safety is almost totally ignored and that the RCMP will not attend anything of a criminal nature until way after the fact; if at all, due to the demand elsewhere in the larger RM area. I know where cottagers are taxed to the N'th degree and are forced to pay for upgrades and systems that are not at all relevant or beneficial to the cottagers. This denigrating of cottagers to a second class citizen level has to stop. They are an asset to their larger community because they are self sufficient and aren't a drain on services supplied elsewhere. They should not be forced into situations in which they have no desire to be placed.

With a population for a major part of the year of over 2600, who have developed a unique, organized and sustainable life style they should be allowed to continue their own personal way of living. Besides which, the cut off number for immersion into an RM is 1000. Vic Beach is well past this number so legally there is no law that enforces this particular amalgamation.

They are environmentally conscious and are doing their utmost to see that their small piece of land meets all regulations for shoreline regulation and sustainability. They have already built and financed their own water system. They are financially stable and are not a drain on anyone else.. They lead their life in harmony and the security of the knowledge that they all care about each other. Why drag them into another regulatory system where their uniqueness is nullified and their voice will mean nothing in policy decisions' that don't even affect them. The place is special; let us all celebrate and be glad that individuality counts even in these days of uniformity for all.

Mrs. Mo Tipples. Cottager, Lake Winnipeg

* * *

Regarding the Proposed Municipal Amalgamations

Prior to the last municipal election, I spent 15 years as the Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach. During this period, many significant infrastructure projects were undertaken and paid for by the municipality --projects such as an addition to the fire hall, an Emergency Measures office, a building to house a new store, a recycling depot, and a 4 million dollar water treatment plant for which no government funding was received. (With regard to the latter, it may be of interest to note that, not long ago, the RM of Alexander rate payers voted down a proposal for a new water system (proposed cost: 8 – 10 million dollars) even though one third of the amount would have been paid by the MB Government, which seems to indicate that they are not in favour of paying for quality of life improvements.) In addition to the projects already mentioned, the RM of Victoria Beach purchased new fire trucks, and new First Responders vehicles and equipment. It also paid for extensive municipal equipment upgrades. As well, the RM of Victoria Beach provides its rate payers with policing, garbage pick-up, recycling, and building inspection.

Most of these facilities and services are not available in the RM of Alexander, although Victoria Beach does supply Ward 1 of Alexander with firefighting and First Responders services, and occasionally our police are called in on a "mutual aid" basis by the RCMP.

Undoubtedly, there are some municipalities in Manitoba that could benefit from an amalgamation. They should proceed, and we wish them well. However, the RM of Victoria Beach will not benefit from a forced amalgamation with the RM of Alexander. The backgrounds, interests, and demographics of the rate payers in these two municipalities are very different. The water plant issue mentioned earlier illustrates certain of these differences: whereas the rate payers at Victoria Beach are committed to having services comparable to those of the city of Winnipeg, the Alexander rate payers are satisfied with services that are common to most rural areas and that are considerably less costly. (Having worked with the RM of Alexander on some of the shared services, I can attest to this.)

There are several areas of concern in Manitoba that can be improved by the province and the

municipalities working together. However, the forced amalgamation of all municipalities whose permanent residents number fewer than 1000 is not one of them.

I trust that common sense will prevail in regard to this forced legislation, and that exceptions will be permitted --- and that these exceptions will include the RM of Victoria Beach.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Bill McDonald

* * *

Subject: Bill 33

I am a concerned citizen and feel that I need to be heard.

Why is this Bill 33 being introduced without input of our citizens? Does this government not believe in satisfying the public by allowing input from its constituents?

Victoria Beach is a vibrant, active thriving municipality unto itself. Why change it? Amalgamation is not beneficial.

The municipality has its own police force, public works department, a new, water system (paid for by our residents without assistance from the present government), volunteer fire department, a unique area that is closed to vehicular traffic for two months in the summer, an active council elected by the citizens during the summer months when the population is highest in the area. By the way our population does exceed the requirements for a municipality by at least 3000 during the summer months. Maybe you are not aware of this fact!!!

Why change something that is functioning beautifully?

The RCMP will not be available to patrol our streets or answer our needs as we know that they are strapped for manpower. As a senior, when I stay at the cottage by myself I feel very safe with our present policing. If this changes I will no longer feel that I will stay alone.

The water system will not be monitored to meet the safety regulations as it is done now.

Traffic will not be monitored to protect our children who now are able to ride their bikes freely on our paths or even allow our children to walk along the roads safely. We have had a bicycle police force which has been very effective on our sandy roadways. They monitor activities on the beaches. It is very reassuring to look up on the banks of the beaches and see our police bike force.

I hope you will read this with concern and interest not just put it aside as another crank message. I want Victoria Beach to survive for many more years as I grew up there as a child and now my grandchildren are riding their bikes there, taking swimming lessons there, having the choices that kids need nowadays.

There must be another option that could be studied. Please look at other options.

Victoria Beach must remain its own municipality!! It is unique and obviously if you are in favour of Bill 33, you have never visited Victoria Beach.

Please visit the area with someone who is familiar with the beach to show you around and partake in its activities before you make a decision!

Sincerely

Margaret Richardson
cottage owner VB

* * *

Re: Bill 33

I write in opposition to Bill 33 as it impacts on my property in the Municipality of Victoria Beach and the quality of life of life I experience there.

Though I am a summer resident at this moment in time, for the following reasons I am strongly opposed to having my property amalgamated with another municipality.

For 48 years of my land ownership, the Victoria Beach Municipality has proved through our taxes: Police protection, fire service, garbage collection, road maintenance, good water . As well the Council has provided satisfying by-laws re for example: building codes, dog control measures, parking and a "closed gate" policy in the summer months. With both local residents and summer residents on the Municipal Council, the over 2000 tax payers have enjoyed a wonderful, unique way of life.

If the Municipality should be forced to amalgamate with other municipalities it is in danger of losing its independence and its ability to deal with matters pertinent only to both the permanent residents and the summer residents. The present Victoria Beach Municipality would have but one councillor on a new council and matters that are dear to the hearts of the present residents (both permanent and summer) could be overturned.

A Police presence full time is essential in the present municipality because of the large number of residents there on site in the summer months. The "closed gate" policy that requires private cars to be left in the parking lot from the end of June until Labour Day is very important. Residents and visitors both young and old, walk and ride bicycles up and down the lanes enjoying the clean air and healthy exercise. By-laws could be changed in a larger amalgamated municipality that would spoil the present ways of life. As land owners and tax payers we are capable of managing our affairs with the full time residents in the Victoria Beach Municipality.

I urge the Government of Manitoba to give thoughtful consideration to the impact that including the Municipality of Victoria Beach in Bill 33 could have on the residents—both permanent and summer—of this municipality. Please forward this letter expressing my opposition to Bill 33 to the appropriate Government Committee.

Sincerely

Margaret McPherson

* * *

Dear Sirs/Mesdames:

Re: Bill 33—The Municipal Modernization Act

The above-captioned Bill has come to our attention.

We are opposed to any suggested amalgamation of the RM of Victoria Beach with the RM of Alexander.

Without limitation:

1. No consultation or opportunity has been given to the tax payers (2,600 plus) of the RM of Victoria Beach to review and vote on any proposed amalgamation;

2. The selection of municipalities with under 1,000 "permanent" residents for amalgamation is arbitrary and without full understanding of the constituents of the RM of Victoria Beach, particularly that there are 2,600 plus tax payers, with usage of facilities by residents well in excess of the arbitrary number of approximately 350 so-called "permanent residents";

3. On what basis does the time of occupancy of a resident establish their right to be heard or included in any decision;

4. The RM of Victoria Beach is a unique property, unparalleled in the Province of Manitoba, with no material affiliation with the RM of Alexander beyond proximity of distance;

5. The RM of Victoria Beach is a strong, viable community, and has no need to amalgamate with and take on all the issues suffered by the RM of Alexander;

6. The RM of Victoria Beach is well represented by its elected council and has no need nor desire to have officials of the RM of Alexander decide, through their majority or controlling votes, issues applicable only to the RM of Victoria Beach.

Respectfully submitted,

D. Wayne Leslie and Barbara Leslie

DWL/ldf

Cc: R.M. of Victoria Beach

* * *

This email is in regards to Bill 33. I feel as a tax payer and a voter that I must express my anger and disgust at what is occurring. As a cottage owner I have for years lived with the reality that cottage owners are treated unfairly by the provincial government. Cottage owners are taxed twice for educational taxes when there is no chance of ever attending the rural school division where our cottages are located. Further, because our cottages are not our primary residences, we are not eligible for any form of disaster relief. So the cottage owner directly beside me who claims their cottage as their primary residence can suffer the same damage as I in a storm and receive compensation while I cannot.

Now the ultimate injustice in Bill 33! The government should be ashamed of their actions. Under Bill 33 the Province has now decided non residents simply do not exist. We apparently have

now completely disappeared in the eyes of the Province. Ironically said non residents can vote in municipal elections however for the purpose of Bill 33 we no longer exist and will not be counted or heard. This is simply unacceptable as a tax payer and someone who has never missed voting in a municipal, provincial or federal election. My cottage is in the RM of Victoria Beach. Many cottage owners at VB purchased cottages at a premium price knowing they would receive premium services. Under the proposed takeover, and lets call this what it is because we are being forced to amalgamate with the RM of Alexander, we will lose not only a way of life, but quality of services. An inventory of the services provided in other cottage areas serviced by Alexander clearly demonstrates what VB will look like in the future. VB has an active police force of six summer officers. The province should know, given it funds additional police officers in the City of Winnipeg, police act as a deterrent. The VB police provide a valuable service when the VB population swells well beyond the arbitrary number (1000) set by the Province. In the future VB will be serviced out of the Powerview RCMP detachment or Grand Beach (Selkirk in winter). The beach will be a low priority given the vast area serviced by the Powerview RCMP detachment. We can also expect to see the elimination of the VB garbage service that reduces the refuse and the interaction with bears. One simply has to look down the road from my cottage into the RM of Alexander to see our future. Garbage barrels with no bear safety mechanisms on Pitt Road with litter thrown all over by wildlife.

To conclude, the minimum number of residents (1000) set by the province is simply arbitrary and lacking sound foundational principles. The RM of Victoria, along with other cottage areas such as Winnipeg Beach, has demonstrated sound fiscal management and strong governance. As well our RM is not in any form of fiscal distress which explains why the RM of Alexander is so eager to absorb our tax base. I find it offensive that the province has chosen to enact legislation that ignores my property rights. I will receive fewer services, be less safe, and based on the tax rates expect to pay about the same. Excuse me if I'm missing the value proposition here. Cottage owners begrudgingly accept the double school taxation and the ineligibility for disaster relief. Now thanks to the province the only vote we really have will be in the next provincial election. That would be the one that I've

never missed and will vote accordingly based on what I believe to be a gross injustice.

Patrick Hoger
Winnipeg
RM Victoria Beach

* * *

Introduction

I would like to add my commentary on the topic of forced Municipal amalgamations, as proposed by the Province of Manitoba's Bill 33, the Municipal Modernization Act.

By way of some context, I am a tax-paying, voting seasonal resident and cottage-owner at Victoria Beach, Manitoba (420 7th Avenue). My wife and I use our residence at Victoria Beach as our primary residence approximately half the year, spending considerable time living there throughout the summers (May to October), as well as the off-seasons, including during the winter. These remarks come to you then from the perspective of someone who lives at Victoria Beach a significant part of every year, pays a very hefty tax bill every year, and who does not count as a "permanent" resident.

Our resort community has more than 2,600 other people in the same boat. Historically, that lack of "permanent" resident status, for practical purposes, hasn't mattered much, either individually or collectively...Victoria Beach had been recognized, along with Winnipeg Beach and Dunnottar, as somewhat unique resort communities, and accorded "Rural Municipality" status in 1933. This status permitted local, autonomous municipal governance that is fully democratic and representative. Bill 33, however, will result in that representation dropping from a locally elected and representative governing Council of five, all elected by the 2600+ ratepayers of Victoria Beach, down to a much smaller minority representation of one out of five in an amalgamated council. This larger amalgamated Council would be created through the mandate of Bill 33, and would create a council dominated by the ratepayers of a larger, more rural, and quite different, Rural Municipality of Alexander. This change in the level of local representation would clearly result in a loss of governing autonomy for the ratepayers of Victoria Beach, and seems fundamentally undemocratic, unfair, and unnecessary.

My comments that follow will elaborate on these points and will fall under four general categories. They are as follows:

1. Comments on the rationale and process of mandating forced municipality amalgamations using a single arbitrary criterion of 1,000 permanent residents.
2. Comments on the history of successful self-governance at Victoria Beach
3. Comments on the inevitable, as well as the potential, negative effects of forcing this amalgamation on Victoria Beach.
4. Comments on the unique, treasured "time-capsule" qualities of Victoria Beach, and a defense of why an 80-year history of successful, independent self-governance should not be put at risk by fundamentally altering its governing autonomy through a forced and unnecessary amalgamation.

The Rationale and Process of Bill 33

a) Historically, rural municipalities have been allowed to initiate amalgamations in situations where sound, logical reasons could be offered as to why an amalgamation of existing municipalities would make sense, and where a consensus in favor of such an amalgamation could be demonstrated amongst the affected ratepayers. Such a request was typically then submitted to the Manitoba Municipal Board for review and approval, which was granted if both the reasons for the amalgamation, and evidence of consensus in favor of amalgamation, were provided. Such a process allowed for democratic input and has worked very well in the past. It did not "force" or "mandate" municipalities to amalgamate...it simply provided the democratic processes for amalgamation to proceed, if that indeed was what the municipalities themselves had chosen. Amalgamations were voluntary, not forced.

That traditional process appears to have been turned on its head, however, by Bill 33. With this bill, the role of the Municipal Board in the process goes away. All of the power to bring about amalgamation resides in the hands of one government minister. The Bill has thereby removed the need for, and even more disturbingly, the right to, democratic participation originating from the municipalities themselves. The rights and the voices of the ratepayers in the affected RM's have been completely eliminated...no consensus is required, indeed no

consensus is even sought. Rather, the power to bring about such fundamental changes in governance has been placed in the hands of one government minister... this is not how democracy is supposed to work.

b) The criterion of using only a permanent population threshold of, 1,000 seems arbitrary, rigid, and unfair, at least in the circumstances of seasonal resort communities such as Victoria Beach, Winnipeg Beach and Dunnottar, that all see marked seasonal increases in population well beyond that threshold for several months of the year. It also completely ignores the fact that, in the case of Victoria Beach at least, with a tax assessment base of \$380 million and 2600 registered voters, the seasonal residents constitute 87% of the overall tax base. Moreover, the RM of Victoria Beach, with this large seasonal population, is in the top 30 of all RMs in the province in terms of its overall tax base.

Surely such a level of seasonal population well beyond the threshold of 1,000, who are collectively paying relatively high taxes, should continue to justify allowing these communities to be recognized as unique "resort municipalities", and thereby permit them to continue their own local municipal governance with their own RM status and their own councils. The "Boston Tea Party" was all about "no taxation without representation" in our neighbor to the south, and this principle was certainly recognized 80 years ago when the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach was created. That recognition has resulted in 80 years of successful and financially self-sustaining governance, and basic democracy requires that the current ratepayers should continue to be allowed that same voice in determining their future form of governance. Bill 33 would remove this historic right completely. Forcing amalgamation using only the arbitrary criterion of a permanent population threshold is rigid and is fundamentally anti-democratic. Because of that, in the unique circumstances of resort communities with large seasonal populations and correspondingly large tax assessments, the process of Bill 33 is deeply flawed.

History of successful self-governance at Victoria Beach

The "Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach Act" was passed by the Manitoba legislature in 1933, and since that time the 5-person Council of the RMVB has provided local, autonomous governance. This has included providing its own municipal policing with

up to 6 full time officers, its own garbage, brush pick-up, and landfill services, its own recycling, and its own municipal water supply that is a product of a \$3.5 million dollar water treatment plant bought (and still in the process of being paid for) by the ratepayers of the RMVB alone. There are also some services shared with the RM of Alexander that include the landfill, snowplow services, as well as Fire and EMT. None of the other services, however, provided by the RMVB are currently provided by the RM of Alexander.

It is very important to point out that all of the above services are paid for solely by the RMVB---the province pays nothing---moreover, the total per capita funding level from the province to the RMVB is \$30,000.00/annum, placing Victoria Beach at the bottom of the list of all RMs in receiving this type of funding from the province. This represents an excellent record of independent and successful municipal self-governance, and the mandate of Bill 33 requiring that this change through unwanted and unnecessary forced amalgamation raises several obvious questions:

- a) How will a forced amalgamation possibly benefit the RMVB, or for that matter, the province?
- b) Why would the government want to interfere with the operation of a successful, financially independent, municipality such as Victoria Beach?
- c) How is it that eliminating such a model of financial independence and success will lead to cost savings for the province? (providing a sound answer to this question is central to the province making the case for proceeding with amalgamation...thus far, the province has been either completely unable, or unwilling, to do so).

Tom Farrell, the current reeve of the RMVB, summed up the case for not destroying such a model of successful governance very nicely in one of the letters sent out to RMVB ratepayers...

"The Municipal Act states that the purpose of a municipality is to provide good government services, facilities, and other things necessary or desirable, and to maintain a safe and viable community. The RM of Victoria Beach believes it clearly meets these purposes and is of the view that many of these services may be lost in a large municipal setting, where demands for lower taxes may dominate the mandate of an amalgamated council".

Well stated.

Real and Potential Negative Effects of Forced Amalgamation

1) Loss of Local Autonomy

It states the obvious to say that forcing the RMVB to amalgamate with the RM of Alexander will result in significant loss of local governing autonomy for Victoria Beach. This will be an unavoidable outcome for Victoria Beach---it is simply not possible to spin it any other way. The 2600+ voting ratepayers of RMVB will go from conducting their own elections for 4 councilors and a reeve in July of an election year (thereby maximizing the number of people who will be available to participate in the election), to electing one representative out of 5 in a larger amalgamated council, in an election held in October, a time when many of the seasonal ratepayers may not be available to vote. Those 2600 ratepayers will have then been significantly (although not completely) disenfranchised, and will have lost a significant amount of the governing autonomy that has been so well used for the past 80 years.

It also states the obvious to point out that the interests and priorities of the much larger, and much more rural, RM of Alexander are likely to be much different from the interests and priorities of the smaller, more "urban" resort community of Victoria Beach. It is quite likely, indeed inevitable, that the ability of Victoria Beach to direct its own future will be significantly compromised...the autonomy that has produced successful self-governance for 80 years will have been lost.

2) Transfer of Assets

The absorption of the RMVB by the RM of Alexander will also result in the transfer of significant assets from Victoria Beach to the RM of Alexander. These assets include the golf course, buildings on the village green, the tennis courts, the fire hall and other municipal buildings, as well as the \$3.5 million dollar water treatment facility, still being paid for by the ratepayers of Victoria Beach alone. One can't help speculating that following this transfer of assets to a new, larger council dominated by non-cottage owners, the management of these assets could change. Priorities may become quite different in terms of continuing the necessary financial support for amenities such as the golf course and tennis courts for example, amenities that receive a relatively high priority in a resort municipality allowed to govern itself.

3) Loss of Existing Police Services

Victoria Beach has always provided, and paid for, its own police force. This has ranged from a force of a single, part-time officer in decades past to currently a force of six or more officers during the peak summer months (June 1 to Sept.30). These services are well regarded, and provide excellent on-site physical police protection and service on a 24/7 basis. This level of coverage will dramatically decrease with forced amalgamation. Bill 33 will essentially mandate 'default' coverage by the RCMP, after an initial 3 year "transition period", during which existing services may be continued. The RM of Alexander currently already has police coverage through the RCMP, but reflecting significant manpower constraints, has only one officer on call at any one time covering the entire region from Bissett in the north to Belair in the south. Victoria Beach will watch its level of on-site police coverage decrease from 24/7 to sharing one officer serving a much larger territory...an inevitable change, not just a potential one, and clearly not a positive one.

4) Restriction of Vehicular Traffic

The loss of governing autonomy, the transfer of existing VB municipal assets, and a major contraction of VB police services are all examples of real change that will inevitably occur if forced amalgamation goes forward. None of these can be seen as positive changes for Victoria Beach in any way. There is another potential change which also becomes possible. I refer to the possible lifting of the 80 year ban on vehicular traffic in the central "restricted area" of the Beach during the months from mid-June to Labour Day. The authority to close the Beach to all vehicular traffic during the peak summer months was granted by the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach Act in 1933, and it has been that ban on cars that is widely understood to be at the very core of what it is about Victoria Beach that makes it unique in the province, indeed, the entire country.

There is concern that the loss of local governing autonomy created by Bill 33 could ultimately put at risk the maintaining of this vehicular ban. Although such a development may be considered unlikely at this point, losing local autonomy certainly creates a political environment where the chances of such profound change for Victoria Beach become significantly greater...it could happen, and if it did, would widely be seen as catastrophic for the culture and identity of the Beach. Property values would

significantly drop, and the "safe haven for kids" that Victoria Beach has always provided would disappear.

My plea to keep things as they are

or,

Victoria Beach is a treasure, please don't put it at risk

It is clear from the foregoing that forcing the RM of Victoria Beach to amalgamate with the RM of Alexander will put at risk 80 years of local governing autonomy and 80 years of successful, financially independent governance. It will put at risk a successful and valued model of police protection; it will put at risk historic models of democratic participation and representation; it will put at risk a highly valued tradition of a vehicular traffic ban during the summer months; it will put property values at risk; the transfer of assets to a larger, rural municipality may mean that such services as garbage collection and even the operation of a VB golf course are also put at risk; and it would certainly risk destroying a culture and traditions that have defined Victoria Beach for more than 80 years. Taken together, these risks are enormous and they are unacceptable. By eliminating a previous well-functioning system of fair and very democratic self-governance, Bill 33 will affect thousands of tax-paying and voting cottage-owners (well beyond an arbitrary threshold of 1,000).

This is wrong. It is misguided, anti-democratic, unfair, and should not happen. Although amalgamation may make sense for some municipalities, it very clearly does not make sense for the RMs of Victoria Beach and Alexander. I urge the government to preserve the 80 year tradition of designating Victoria Beach as a resort community, thus allowing continuance of its own very successful municipal governance. The provincial legislators of 1933 certainly recognized the unique circumstances of summer resorts with large seasonal populations and large tax assessments, and appropriately carved out local, autonomously governing, Rural Municipality status for each of them. These RMs have worked very well as successful models of local governance, and have proven that the legislators of 80 years ago were far-sighted in their thinking and decisions. The current government should be acknowledging and enhancing those models, not dismantling them.

I urge the government to show some flexibility and common sense in their efforts to improve our

provincial municipal system of governance...they are to be applauded for those goals...but forcing the seasonal resort communities such as Victoria Beach to lose their autonomy through forced amalgamation is clearly, and most emphatically, not the way to go.

Finally, to quote much wiser men than myself...

"One size does not always fit all"

"Bigger is not always better"

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it"

Phil Murray

* * *

Re: Bill 33, Municipal Amalgamation

We are writing to you as property owners in the RM of Victoria Beach to oppose the passing of Bill 33, and to express our objection to imposing amalgamation on municipalities such as ours.

If other municipalities see an advantage for themselves in joining forces with another municipality, then they should be allowed to do so. However, the concept of forced amalgamation will impose an unfair burden, and loss of services for some areas such as Victoria Beach.

While there may be under 1000 permanent residents living in the RM of Victoria Beach during the winter months, there are 2600 taxpayers and a total of 10,000 residents living in the RM of Victoria Beach in the summer months. In fact, seasonal residents contribute 87% of the tax revenue collected in the municipality and the permanent residents only 13%. All residents are very involved in the community and attend council meetings in both winter and summer.

The RM of Victoria Beach is a unique municipality that has its own Council, Police Department, Fire Station, First Responders, road maintenance, golf course, water treatment plant, and a committee studying lakeshore erosion. We have established these services independently, and do not want to lose them by losing control of our own decision making. Becoming part of a larger municipal group would take away our autonomy, and weaken our position as a community.

Victoria Beach is a historic area which has its own unique character and all the residents want to keep it that way. We want to keep the roads free of motorized traffic in the summer months. We want to protect our beaches. We value the services we have worked hard to achieve, and want to retain them.

We urge you not to force amalgamation on municipalities.

Sincerely,

Jim and Carol Nowell

* * *

To the Standing Committee Re: Bill 33.

I am writing this submission in opposition to Bill 33–Forced Amalgamation.

I am a retired employee of the R.M. of Shellmouth-Boulton and was very instrumental in the amalgamation of the RMs of Boulton and Shellmouth in 1999. This was not a forced amalgamation. The two municipalities had many shared services and the councils of the day had the vision to realize that this would be in the best interests of the ratepayers. The amalgamation proceeded without any problems.

However, to be forced to amalgamate with another municipality that may not have the same goals and interests, financial or otherwise, would definitely not be in the best interests of the ratepayers involved.

The R.M. of Shellmouth-Boulton is unique in that it boasts many provincial and national heritage sites. Lake of the Prairies, Asessippi Provincial Park, Asessippi Ski Hill and many cottage developments. The councils–past and present–have worked very diligently in developing the area to make it a remarkable place to live and visit.

The Government of Manitoba has got to stop and re-think this forced amalgamation and leave it up to the individual municipalities to make their own decisions. Like the R.M. of Shellmouth-Boulton did.

Do the taxpayers not have any say in this proposed law? Where have our democratic rights gone? The municipalities are resisting the dictatorial approach to this initiative.

As a taxpayer, I am hoping and confident that the Government will listen to Manitobans and leave the decision up to the people of Manitoba.

Thank you for your time.

Dianne Ungarian

* * *

Standing Committee on Bill 33,

In reference to the letter from Mr. Thomas Farrell, Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach, to The Honourable Ron Lemieux, outlining reasons for requesting an exemption from Bill 33; we agree in all respects.

We question why the number of registered voters is not taken into consideration of population count as they are taxed for the full year at the same mill rate as the permanent residents.

We hereby add our protest to this amalgamation.

Eleanor and Ellert Wattis.

* * *

Government Bill 33 of the second session of the 40th Legislature the province Manitoba has recommended that municipalities having fewer than 1000 residents be amalgamated. We are not opposed generally to amalgamation of those smaller communities that are in agreement and compatible, and where synergies and cost savings make sense.

The introduction to Bill 33 states;

"WHEREAS municipal boundaries were first established more than 100 years ago;

AND WHEREAS the boundaries no longer reflect where people live, work and do business;

AND WHEREAS municipalities need to have adequate populations to provide essential infrastructure and services to their citizens;"

The boundaries of the RM of Victoria Beach ("RMVB") were established less than 100 years ago, and continue to reflect where people live and work and do business in the vacation beach area; and the RMVB continues to have adequate populations to provide essential infrastructure and services to its citizens. Based on these assertions, Government Bill 33 is not applicable to RMVB.

A draft amalgamation plan has appeared to reflect the amalgamation of the RMVB and the RM of Alexander ("RMA"), based on the RMVB having less than 1000 residents requiring it to amalgamate with the RMA. The "1000 resident" number in Bill 33 is artificial and arbitrary. Particular circumstances of each municipality should also have been considered, such as significant non-resident ownership.

We are categorically opposed to the proposed amalgamation of RMVB with RMA. The

government should not be forcing mergers but should facilitate and assist those who wish to do so. Our municipal Council and the vast majority of permanent residents of RMVB oppose the merger without condition and reservation.

What the government is trying to do, in this instance, is to force a merger with two completely incompatible municipalities. The RMA is essentially an agricultural based municipality spread over a large area with little connection to the eastern side of Lake Winnipeg. Whereas, the RMVB is a compact geographical area, and is ideally suited for affordable recreational home ownership with its unique vehicle restricted area and independence. The infrastructure and services that may be offered by the RMA would be many kilometers away on the other side of a significant aboriginal reserve.

We see no tangible benefits that could be brought about by an amalgamation of these two municipalities. The draft amalgamation plan proposes a Council consisting of the head of counsel and four counselors, each counselor representing one ward. The district containing RMVB would be only one of four wards. Should this be the case, then the proposed plan is not an amalgamation but a hostile takeover.

RMVB has an effective elected Council, has a well managed administration, is financially viable and will continue to be so as an independent municipality. Our municipality has an adequate population (resident and non-resident) to provide essential infrastructure to the community. RMVB has a long established and active local Community Association, currently undertaking the completion of a new curling club and administration centre, as well as an active Seniors Group that operates throughout the year out of a separate facility.

Each non-resident property owner of the RMVB now has a vote in municipal elections. In excess of 80% of revenues generated by the RMVB are contributed by non-resident property owners. Our Council is accountable to all property owners in the municipality. The Non-resident property owners of the RMVB, aggregating in excess of 2,600 taxpayers, should have been considered in the determination of the population size of a municipality to be amalgamated and to have a say and vote on the matter. The wishes of the majority of property owners should not be ignored. To exclude the non-permanent residents is undemocratic and uncharacteristic of a normally inclusive socialist

government. The government should do the right thing and withdraw the proposal to force the RMVB to be merged with any other municipality.

Should the government insist and arbitrarily with a heavy hand force the hostile takeover of the RMVB, a number of provisions must be imbedded in any and all merger documents that would protect the uniqueness and quality of the RMVB. Notwithstanding, proposed provisions to have a single policing provider, existing RMVB policing must remain in the RMVB Ward due the need for closer supervision of the roads, beaches and recreation areas. Existing fire prevention policies must also be retained. No changes should be allowed regarding the current restrictions for driving in the restricted area in the 10 week summer period, without the consent of the majority of all property owners in the restricted area/Ward. The existing parking lot at the entrance to the restricted area is essential and should remain unchanged. The grocery store and certain other buildings in the restricted area must be retained as assets of the merged municipality to provide services to the local area. The Victoria Beach golf course, while currently subsidized, must be maintained as an asset of municipality and not sold.

Respectively Submitted by:

David and Constance Drybrough
Victoria Beach, Manitoba

* * *

Re: Bill 33 Municipal Modernization Act

The Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs:

The Village of Binscarth has for thirteen years negotiated with the neighbouring municipalities a tax sharing agreement that made the entire region stronger. The five municipalities were able to keep their own local government and identity. The recent mandatory amalgamation through Bill 33 has jeopardized this delicate working environment. The newly amalgamated municipality may or may not include all five municipalities. We do not think that will make us stronger. We ask that Bill 33 Section 3 (4) be amended to read December 1, 2017. This will allow the municipalities' time to negotiate a new and meaningful partnership, and time for the taxpayers to be informed about the issue.

Sincerely,

Dale Sawchuk
Mayor

* * *

Dear Sir/Madam

Why does the current NDP government in Manitoba want to fix something that is not broken?

I am a permanent resident of the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach and as such, at risk of losing a great deal with the passing of Bill 33. My family members have been summer residents of this beautiful resort community since 1923 and two years ago, I chose to live here full-time. The RM has been able to provide me with a great deal of services for my tax dollar, including year-round policing, excellent snow clearing during the winter months, summer municipal water, door-to-door garbage pick-up throughout the summer months, and brush removal in the spring and fall.

We are a geographically small municipality but enjoy great expanses of green space. We have a council consisting of four councilors and a reeve, who all work extremely hard to preserve this little piece of paradise that so many people enjoy. Our permanent population is not great but the seasonal population is. Whether you live in the RM of Victoria Beach year-round or just enjoy vacation time here, you pay the same taxes. And these taxes have been able to provide us with the services I itemized and much more.

Forced amalgamation with not benefit tax payers of the RM of Victoria Beach. If we were to become a part of our adjacent municipality, we would potentially lose amenities such as policing and garbage pick-up as these are not provided in the RM of Alexander. We would become part of a ward of this RM and would have minimal representation on council. We would lose our uniqueness as a resort municipality.

The threshold of 1000 residents is arbitrary. The Municipal Modernization Act states as a reason for amalgamation: "municipalities need to have adequate populations to provide essential infrastructure and services to their citizens". The Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach is able to provide essential infrastructure and services (and more) to its citizens, and therefore has an adequate population to do so.

I am strongly opposed to the concept of forced amalgamation and am registering my opposition to Bill 33, The Municipal Modernization Act (Municipal Amalgamations). Do not force

amalgamation on the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach.

Yours truly,

Mary McIntosh

* * *

Dear Sir or Madam,

In general, politicians are held in low esteem. Why? I think one reason must be because politicians in general cannot be trusted – they say one thing and do another. A case in point is the PST referendum. The law states a referendum must be held if the PST is to be changed, but the present government ignores its own legislation. I think the law should be followed and a referendum held on the PST.

In my opinion, another reason that politicians in general are held in low esteem must be because, once they are elected, they often ignore voters. A case in point is Bill 33 – the Municipal Amalgamation. The Bill presently proposes that it is the number of permanent residents that is the criterion, and not the number of voters / rate payers. That does not make sense to me. The Bill also contains many 'musts', which I find disagreeable and undemocratic. I think the Bill needs amendments. I suggest the proposal should be that "municipalities with fewer than 1,000 rate payers should be encouraged to prepare an amalgamation plan".

Yours truly,

K. Helmut Hesse
Rate payer and voter

* * *

Re: Bill 33 – The Municipal Modernization Act –
New Municipal Amalgamation Legislation

Dear Members of the Standing Committee of the
Legislature,

I am a tax payer of the RM of Victoria Beach, Mb,
and have a cottage so classified as a "summer
resident".

I do not oppose amalgamation if it is voluntary.

I strongly oppose forced amalgamation and oppose
the short time frame suggested by the government.

I feel:

- The government of Manitoba should assess the viability and sustainability of the communities it is targeting.
- province should then assist municipalities who choose to amalgamate by providing all the support necessary, monitoring the implementation and highlighting its benefits.
- The province could work with those municipalities that are struggling to be sustainable on acceptable guidelines that will result in better service delivery.

What possible positive outcome could we the tax payers of the RM of Victoria Beach receive with the amalgamation with the RM of Alexander?

- At present all our taxes stay in the RM of Victoria Beach for the betterment of our community.
- Our budgets are balanced and audited
- We have a functional Public Works Department
- We have a water treatment plant totally paid for by the tax payers of the RM of Victoria Beach and maintained to provincial standards.
- Our Reeve and Council meet twice monthly and agendas and minutes are available on their web site.
- Council meetings are held at the beach during July and August.
- We have weekly garbage pick up and an active recycling depot.
- Our store, bakery, and Moonlight Inn are owned by the RM and leased.
- We have our own year round Police Department.
- We have land use and land development plans.
- We have a tax base of 2600 tax payers.
- We have our own volunteer fire department and trained emergency responders
- The RM owns and operates a 9 hole golf course, plus many acres of additional green space.

I am a tax payer of the RM of Headingley. We
seceded from the City of Winnipeg over 20 years

ago. Our tax dollars stay in our municipality and since then we now have sewer and water, paved roads, a volunteer fire dept, trained emergency responders, a new library and recreation facilities and programs plus many other benefits that we never had before.

Because of my experience in Headingley I strongly feel the RM of Victoria Beach should remain an independent RM and our tax dollars remain in our municipality to continue to provide the services we currently receive.

To do otherwise will be the demise of our Resort Municipality Classification.

Respectfully submitted
Marlene Boyda
Victoria Beach, Mb

* * *

Dear Standing Committee,

I am writing to you today in regards to the provinces forced amalgamation of municipalities that are under 1000 population (Bill 33) I support the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach council's request to be exempt from this forced amalgamation. I strongly urge the government to reconsider and put an end to Bill 33. Firstly, amalgamation of smaller municipalities should be a choice and should not be forced as we do live in a democracy. Secondly, the arbitrary threshold of a population of 1000 permanent residence does not make any sense and there is no proof that this will affect or benefit communities. Victoria Beach may only have 374 permanent residents but has a much larger tax base and a population of 5000-10000 during the spring, summer and fall months. With such a large tax base we should be exempt from this forced amalgamation. Thirdly, Victoria Beach is an urban resort community. It is a healthy and prospering community that is flourishing under a very different set of needs than a rural municipality with farms and towns. Our main concern is to conserve the nature, the beaches and our history not to build and develop buildings and apartments. The concern for infrastructure and economic development is irrelevant in a resort community where the community cherishes it's sandy paths, open fields and does not require the building or development of schools as in other urban or rural areas. Victoria Beach is not about commercial development and economic development in the way a town or city would want to grow. The founders of our community

had a vision to protect the land and create a unique resort community. They bought the land and properties in 1912, which became our restricted area and the heart of Victoria Beach. About 50 years after the founding of the Victoria Beach Company, Art Vincent concerned that the protected land be sold for profit and development, purchased from stake holders the land and shares promising the Municipality that he would remain true to the original founders design. This took many years of hard work on behalf of Art Vincent. Art Vincent thought beyond his life and eventually sold the land for a nominal amount to the council so that it would be protected forever. Our council has been given this incredible piece of Manitoba to safeguard from commercialization and development. They also hold the vehicular restriction that truly makes Victoria Beach a unique gem. This restriction provides a safe haven for all cyclists and pedestrians especially our young "Victoria Beachers". It also creates a very environmentally sustainable community. Now many "Victoria Beachers" stand before you asking you to respect the intentions, decades of hard work in protecting our founders and great Manitobans like Art Vincent and their work in creating Victoria Beach. The closest rural municipality is the RM of Alexander. Their plan is simply to absorb us into one of their wards, we may or may not have one representative within this ward which is extremely detrimental to our community.

Victoria Beach is a very unique, self-sufficient resort community in Manitoba and we have remained so because of our council's support and understanding of the unique needs of the community. There are approximately 2600 taxpayers, a seasonal population ranging from 5000 to 10000 persons. We have a tax base of 380 million dollars 87% of it paid by seasonal non-permanent residence. According to Bill 33 this 87% does not count and is considered inconsequential which is democratically speaking hard to understand. Our community has it's own police force that employs 6 officers, fire and EMT service, garbage and recycling service. We have also built our own water treatment plant in excess of \$3.2 million paid for by the Victoria Beach taxpayers. Our community values and has maintained it's restricted area or vehicular restriction like no other in Manitoba, Canada or North America. Our community in the past few years has come back together to work on and develop a shoreline management plan to ensure the beaches of Victoria Beach and the shoreline properties of Victoria Beach are protected. With lack of council representation

and support the progress in the area of creating the Victoria Beach community will be inadequately represented. The closest municipality to us wants to absorb us into a ward therefore we may or may not have representation. In making this decision to force communities to amalgamate has the government put any consideration into the uniqueness of different communities and their actual needs?

The closest RM is Alexander and it's needs are very different then the RM of Victoria Beach. Amalgamating or being basically absorbed into this municipality will not benefit our community. There is no specific reason for forcing a strong, healthy viable community such as Victoria Beach to be absorbed into a community with completely different needs and interests such as Alexander. Exemptions need to be made in this case.

In our resort community, elections for the community are held in July to accommodate the very active and involved community members. At the last election Victoria Beach had 2700 voters, which, is well over the 1000 population request for this forced amalgamation. This is one reason that makes us such a strong, vibrant and active community. Our RM office in the city provides a valuable resource to the community allowing us to attend council meetings, consult with councillors and vote in elections. The RM of Alexander would close this office cutting off 87% of our population from the ability to participate in the community. During the summer months our council meetings are held in a hall at Victoria Beach to accommodate the large numbers of involved citizens. If we are forced to amalgamate we will lose these important aspects that we have built into our community and the simple ability to vote in the summer months.

The police force will be decommissioned as part of this Bill. We are a remote community. In the summer months we have 5000-10000 in population. How will our safety needs be met? This has not been addressed in the RM of Alexander's plan to absorb us. They do have a police force and therefore no experience or understanding of this. How can this government in this day and age condone the loss of this type of service? I do respect the RCMP but they are stationed far away and are often under staffed and unable to make calls in the areas they patrol. Frequently, the surrounding communities in the RM of Alexander call the Victoria Beach police to situations where the RCMP are unable to make the call.

This type of amalgamation will break down the values of the community that will in turn affect our property values. This will be an incredible loss for our community but, also Manitoba as a whole. It is part of the heritage of our province. There is much out of province money brought into Manitoba through our out of province and out of country cottage owners. Out of province people rent and provide a lot of tourism into Manitoba.

The AAM believes that the decision of whether municipalities should amalgamate or not should rest on the rural municipalities. There are approximately 90 municipalities that would be affected by a forced amalgamation. There has been no evidence or reason given that proves that this forced amalgamations will benefit our community at Victoria Beach.

In a Free Press Article just last November it was stated: "We want to really engage the municipalities in a process over the next year on voluntary amalgamation." Local Government Minister Ron Lemieux, Winnipeg Free Press, Nov. 19, 2013. What happened to this democratic voluntary process the New Democratic Party spoke of? What changed that it would force communities into situations that are ill suited and detrimental to them? It is democratically wrong that 87% of a community that pays taxes and is involved does not count.

In closing I support of RMVB councils request to be exempt from this provincial policy.

I strongly urge you to not support Bill 33 and allow municipalities to decide whether amalgamation is in their best interest. In the case of Victoria Beach it will be detrimental.

The government should not be forcing amalgamation. If this is truly beneficial to communities they should be working with communities to help create a situation that is mutually beneficial to both municipalities.

There should be an absolute exemption to those municipalities that are financially viable and/or resort communities such as Victoria Beach.

Please feel free to call me and arrange a visit to Victoria Beach to see how unique and what a loss this will be to our province.

Sincerely,
Trish Richardson Mason
Proud Manitoban
Winnipeg Manitoba
Victoria Beach, Manitoba

* * *

Re: Bill 33

Municipal Modernization Act

Please register my no vote to Bill 33. I am a Victoria Beach tax payer. I have owned my cottage since 1982.

I strongly oppose the Modernization Act.

Sincerely,

Joan Irving

* * *

Re: Bill 33

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to express my outrage at Bill 33. Taxpayers of Victoria Beach have demonstrated they are able to provide essential infrastructure and services to our citizens. We have adequate population to provide. Our boundaries do reflect where people live, work and do business. Therefore taxpayers and voters of Victoria Beach have met the criteria set by our minister of local government. Victoria Beach should not be forced into amalgamation.

Sincerely,

Debra McKibbin

* * *

Bill 33 – The Municipal Modernization Act

Dear Committee Members:

I was the CAO of the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach for over 22 years until I retired in 2011. I am writing to draw your attention to relevant factual information which should incite you to amend proposed Bill 33 specifically with respect to the forced amalgamation of Victoria Beach. Although I understand that amalgamation may be beneficial for some municipalities which are having difficulty providing municipal services on a cost-efficient basis, I fail to comprehend why the provincial government is proposing, without any meaningful consultation, the forced amalgamation of all municipal corporations with permanent populations under 1,000 residents. Since the local taxpayers are

directly affected and are the ones who “pay the bill” it should be up to the same local taxpayers to decide when amalgamation is appropriate for their area. If the government is determined to force amalgamations then the criteria should not be limited to permanent population but should include a common sense approach taking into consideration a number of relevant factors.

Bill 33 requires the amalgamation of a municipality under 1,000 permanent residents with a neighbouring municipality providing there is some common boundary. In the case of Victoria Beach, the Rural Municipality of Alexander is the only municipality with land that borders its boundaries.

There are many factual statistics which confirm beyond the shadow of a doubt that Victoria Beach is a viable and flourishing municipal corporation. These include:

1) Financial Viability – Victoria Beach Statistics

- a) 2013 property assessment in excess of 360,000,000 – 28th highest in Manitoba – only 1 incorporated town has a higher total assessment
- b) Over 2,600 taxpayers
- c) Approximately 1,900 properties including ~ 1,500 dwellings
- d) 700+ building permits issued in the past decade
- e) Undeveloped land holdings ~ 1,000 acres (excluding dedicated land - green spaces, parks, public reserves) includes 2,000+ feet of lakefront – estimated market value, if developed, would be in the \$20 to \$30 million range

2) Economics

- a) 2013 municipal mill rate (10.42) is 0.8 lower than the "proposed" amalgamation partner – Rural Municipality of Alexander
- b) Victoria Beach (with a lower mill rate) provides far more services to its taxpayers than Alexander including municipal police, garbage pick-up, brush pick-up, municipal water systems distributing potable water to ~ 1,200 customers, etc.
- c) Victoria Beach provides its taxpayers with a service delivery that is equivalent or superior to Alexander including:

i) full-time public works staff with a wide range of up-to-date equipment - grader, plow truck, gravel truck, ½ ton trucks, backhoe, tractors, etc.

ii) municipally-owned and operated fire department including pumper, tanker, equipment vehicle, "jaws of life", etc.

iii) municipally-owned and operated medical rescue service including non-transport ambulance, medical equipment and trained EMTs

iv) municipal police service complete with qualified police officers, vehicles, equipment and office

3) Leading The Way

a) Victoria Beach built a state-of-the-art water treatment plant (~ \$3.5 million) in operation in 2008 – no government funding provided / employs 4 certified Class II operators

b) Victoria Beach is the only Manitoba municipality to implement the Fire Smart / Red Zone Program in partnership with the Manitoba Model Forest. It is a database program containing a complete inventory of all properties including photos, in a Powerpoint format, providing relevant and vital information respecting fire risks, property information, etc.

c) Victoria Beach is the only Manitoba municipality to implement a Wildfire Protection Plan in partnership with Manitoba Conservation and the Fire Commissioner's Office. The Plan involved training of volunteer firefighters to effectively deal with a wildfire. It also enables the municipality's firefighters to quickly access relevant local information from a database including water sources and incorporates a strategy for firefighting, equipment use and identifies resources that may be available from Conservation and OFC to mitigate damage or loss of property.

d) Victoria Beach is one of a few, if not the only Manitoba municipality currently committed to an on-going study (includes the services of a national engineering firm) of its shorelines to implement a plan to reduce bank erosion and preserve its sandy beaches

e) Victoria Beach partnered with Manitoba NetSet (2011) to provide its residents with wireless high-speed internet

f) Victoria Beach operates one of the most effective recycling programs in the province

g) Victoria Beach provides municipal police, fire, medical rescue, garbage pick-up, brush pick-up, golf course and leases municipally-owned properties to provide its taxpayers with a seasonal store, restaurant and bakery

4) Compatibility / Commonality

a) Victoria Beach is an urban municipality primarily of a seasonal recreational nature / Alexander is a large geographic municipality which is mostly rural in nature

b) Victoria Beach is a "full-service" municipality as outlined above / Alexander is a "basic service" municipality which does not directly provide many of the services outlined above

c) Victoria Beach council and its taxpayers are opposed to commercial development and the municipality does not require that type of development to be financially viable as illustrated above / Alexander is pro-economic development

d) Victoria Beach is the only municipality in Manitoba that may restrict vehicular traffic within its boundaries (The Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach Act)

e) Victoria Beach provides "extraordinary" services to its taxpayers (due to the summer traffic restrictions) that are unique – seasonal store, bakery, restaurant & parking lot

5) Amalgamation – A Good Thing?

a) Victoria Beach's actual financial assets far exceed the amounts recorded on its PSAB statements – its land holdings valued at \$1 under PSAB rules are actually worth \$20 to \$30 million

b) Victoria Beach has kept its "financial house" in order for almost 100 years (incorporated in 1919) and has experienced many positive signs of a strong and flourishing municipality - examples are - growth in permanent population (almost doubled in the last 20 years from 196 to 374), exponential growth in property assessment (top 28 in Manitoba), millions of dollars of new cottage construction in the past decade

c) Victoria Beach's 2013 administrative costs (\$200,000) are less than ½ of Alexander's (\$401,000)

d) Victoria Beach's 2013 mill rate (10.42) is 0.8 lower than Alexander's (11.22) yet it provides more services to its taxpayers than Alexander

e) Shared Services - Victoria Beach currently provides fire and medical rescue services to part of Alexander and the Seniors Scene (drop-in centre) located in Victoria Beach provides many services to Alexander seniors. Victoria Beach and Alexander jointly own and cost-share the operation of the Traverse Bay Landfill / Lagoon

f) The 2600+ taxpayers now have 5 local elected representatives will have a maximum of 1, if amalgamated

The information I have provided is not a finite list of services or complete picture of Victoria Beach operations; it is intended to illustrate how outrageous proposed Bill 33 is with respect to the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach. If amalgamated, Victoria Beach will become part of Ward 1 of Alexander due to the "resident" legislation relating to the establishment of wards and will have a maximum of 1 local councillor. We are to believe that 1 elected official will provide the same representation as 5! And will likely pay more municipal taxes to have far fewer, if not less efficient, services!! And it is even quite possible that Victoria Beach has a greater financial "net worth" than Alexander!!! Surely, the government of Manitoba can deal with the amalgamation issue on a case-by-case basis using a logical common sense approach. The Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach council and its taxpayers, at the very least, deserve the respect of the provincial government. That will involve taking note of factual information, listening to reasonable arguments and recognizing the municipality's accomplishments (much of it without any financial aid from the province). It is obvious that the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach is not only a financially viable entity but it has been and continues to be of vital importance to its local taxpayers and residents.

As you can see from my submission, Victoria Beach has not "sat on its laurels" and not only is it in a strong financial position, it has been a leader in providing quality services to its residents for many decades and is well positioned to continue to do the same for many years into the future. I am hopeful that you will consider all the important factors that are relevant in determining the viability of a municipality and will recommend the necessary amendments to Bill 33 to enable Victoria Beach to retain its present status.

Raymond Moreau

* * *

Bill 33 – The Municipal Modernization Act

Dear Committee Members:

As a property owner and seasonal resident of Victoria Beach, I am writing to express my complete disagreement to proposed Bill 33 specifically with respect to the forced amalgamation of Victoria Beach. I don't understand why the provincial government is proposing, without any meaningful consultation or forethought, the forced amalgamation of all municipal corporations with permanent populations under 1,000 residents. Since the local taxpayers are the ones who are directly affected and are the ones who pay for the services it should be up to the same local taxpayers to decide when amalgamation is appropriate for their area. And why are the seasonal residents of Victoria Beach (~2300) whose properties are taxed at the very same rate as permanent residents' properties not granted any consideration? Why don't I count?

The facts that the government should be considering (with respect to Victoria Beach) are:

- 1) 2013 property assessment in excess of 360,000,000 – 28th highest in Manitoba – only 1 incorporated town has a higher total assessment
- 2) There are ~ 170 Manitoba municipalities with a lower property assessment
- 3) 2,600+ taxpayers most of them (~2300) are seasonal residents paying their full share of the property taxes
- 4) 2600+ taxpayers paying in excess of \$2.2 million of education taxes to the Lord Selkirk School Division
- 5) 5,000 to 10,000 seasonal residents during the summer
- 6) All new cottages built in the last 2 or 3 decades are essentially houses built to Building Code standards and many are used during all 4 seasons of the year

I would like to know what prompted the government of Manitoba to force amalgamations on municipalities. I don't recall this matter being brought up as an election issue. I find it inconceivable that a Bill is being presented without any real public consultation and which proposes to

amalgamate a municipality (Victoria Beach) which is financially viable and self-sustaining.

It is my understanding that Victoria Beach would be amalgamated with the R. M. of Alexander pursuant to the provisions of Bill 33. Is the government aware of the following facts?:

a) Victoria Beach's 2013 municipal mill rate (10.42) is 0.8 lower than the "proposed" amalgamation partner – Rural Municipality of Alexander (11.22)

b) Victoria Beach budgeted council expenses (2013) are \$74,200; Alexander's are \$166,400

c) Victoria Beach (with a lower mill rate) provides far more services to its taxpayers than Alexander including municipal police, garbage pick-up, brush pick-up, etc.

d) Victoria Beach provides its taxpayers with a service delivery that is second to none in the province including full-time public works staff and equipment, fire department, medical rescue service and municipal police service complete with qualified police officers

In my opinion Victoria Beach has very little in common with Alexander. There is no farm land in Victoria Beach as it is an urban style municipality while Alexander is comprised mostly of large tracts of farm land and forested areas. I am also well aware that Alexander provides very few services to its taxpayers, far fewer than Victoria Beach, despite having a higher municipal mill rate.

It is my understanding that, if amalgamated, Victoria Beach will become part of Ward 1 of Alexander and will have a maximum of 1 local councillor. We currently have 5 council members who are definitely needed since they provide a high level of service to the municipality's taxpayers. Surely, the government doesn't think that we are foolish enough to believe that 1 member is better than 5! And we will likely pay more municipal taxes to have far fewer, if not less efficient, services!!

The government of Manitoba must deal with the amalgamation issue in a logical common sense approach not by using permanent population as the sole criteria. If it insists on excluding the vast majority of the taxpayers in its determination of what constitutes a viable municipality then those same taxpayers should not be required to pay taxes. The often heard excuse is "there is only one taxpayer" – if

that's the case then there should only be one tax bill! It's time the government started listening to the people and using sound judgement instead of trying to bully its citizens into submission. What are the potential benefits to the taxpayers if Victoria Beach is amalgamated with the R. M. of Alexander?

It is obvious that the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach is not only a financially viable entity but it has been and continues to be of vital importance to its local taxpayers and residents. I hope that you will consider all the important factors that are relevant in determining the viability of a municipality and will make the necessary amendments to exclude Victoria Beach from this proposed legislation.

Mona Yvon-Moreau

* * *

Sir or Madame,

As a property owner at Victoria Beach I support Council's position to remain independent and to retain our resort municipality designation

Sincerely

Frances Krahn

* * *

Re Bill #33 submission to committee

I wish to emphasize that the long standing values of the NDP party of being sensitive to the concerns of each person and each tax payer should influence this legislation. This is the traditional value of the NDP party of Schreyer and Pawley that always made the value of kindness and understanding a top priority, in the early 1970's until the mid 1980's. In the case of the present municipal amalgamation Bill #33 I see the need for mutual understanding and big hearted flexibility in developing the specific terms of this new legislation in Bill 33. The legislation should include legal terms that will allow for an open and sensitive approach by the government with each municipality's specific and unique circumstances.

My understanding the overall goals of this legislation is primarily for economic financial security and solid long range planning of infrastructure and human resources. There are specific municipalities that have less than 1,000 permanent residents but are still very financially viable with long term sustainable due a high property tax assessment from non-resident taxpayers. The terms of Bill #33 should allow for

this non-resident taxpayers aspect which is an unique circumstances in Manitoba.

One related point I wish to make to Bill 33's legal clauses is to change resident property owners to taxpayers (resident or non resident) to this legislation. I propose there maybe unique municipalities which may have a resident population well below 1000, But have considerable resources due to the high value property tax base. This allows smaller but well-resourced Municipalities like the R.M. of Victoria Beach to 100% honour all these future goals of the proposed new legislation without actually amalgamating with any neighbouring municipalities The 2600 non-resident property owners add immensely to the tax base.

I also wish to make further constructive re-adjustments and enhancements to the new amalgamation legislation:

Within any two municipalities I propose it may take from 3 to 5 or even 7 years to resolve organizational development and day to day operations in the newly formed Municipality. If the amalgamation is rushed without full comprehensive consultation and/or referendums as required by the process could result in negative feelings of abuse by a government bureaucracy. I would suggest that forcing and or rushing the process is 100% contrary to NDP principles of kindness to the average person, and sensitivity and warmth to the real and passionate issues people have as loyal Manitobans and Canadians I am therefore suggesting in all sincerity to build in legal terms that will allow an extensive highly flexible implementation schedule for this new legislation. For example if two municipalities are working in honest due diligence on amalgamation options but require a considerable and perhaps lengthy period of time, the new legislation should incorporate this flexibility and respect. Amendments should be included that would allow the time to accept the honest and sincere efforts being taken by two municipalities. Municipalities must be given time to genuinely resolve issues prior to final amalgamation rather than having dysfunctional operations and angry hurt feeling within a new organization which will defeat the goals of this new legislation,

I appreciate that committee members treat this new legislation in sensitive refection to my open hearted concerns. My wife and I have been taxpayers in Victoria beach since 1975 and we hope to share our

life in summer and even in Winter with my daughter her husband and their three young daughters ages 13, 3 years and 11 months for many years in the future .

I wish to extend my appreciation to the committee members for reflecting on my heart felt suggestions. The process of proceeding with sensitive and well thought out amendments will enhance Bell #33 legislation. The present Government's relations with Manitobans in the East beaches area will be greatly enhanced and appreciated if the more flexible(and perhaps slower), but sensitive approach is followed

Bryan Purdy, P Eng
Victoria Beach
Winnipeg

* * *

Dear Sirs/Madams,

Further to the correspondence we have received regarding the Municipal Modernization Act, and the New Municipal Amalgamation Legislation, we are writing to you as concerned property owners at Victoria Beach.

As one of the 2600+ taxpayers that does not reside full-time at Victoria Beach, we hold its unique charm and culture as extremely important, which is why we travel the 17 hours from British Columbia two or three times per year to spend time and our money in Manitoba. While we do not claim Manitoba as our home province, or VB as our full time residence, we certainly consider ourselves vested in the Municipality, as can be attested to by the property taxes we pay annually, and the time we spend there.

We do not wish to see the Municipality merged with any others, as we are in fact very unique, and want to keep it so. Our property values are distinctively higher than neighbouring beach communities, in large part due to this distinction. We seem to be well capable of holding our own as a municipality and fail to see any benefit, but many detriments to an amalgamation.

We contribute to the economy of Manitoba. If VB wasn't so unique, we would never have purchased in the area and would absolutely hate to see this change.

We fail to understand why it is that the government of Manitoba has put this bill forward without

describing any benefits to the communities being affected. We would very much like to see this bill defeated, and to ensure that our Municipality is not amalgamated with any others.

Sincerely,

Deborah & Victor Ritchie
Victoria Beach, Manitoba

* * *

Ref: Bill 33 - Rural Municipality Amalgamation

Dear Sir;

I am writing today to lodge an official complaint in regards to the Proposed Bill 33 which is upcoming.

The Present NDP Government has obviously in this case not looked at the down side of this legislation. The proposed amalgamation would be much better suited to have for the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach, gain the addition of Hillside Beach, Traversbay and Belair to its land area, rather than pushing it in with Alexander. At this time Alexander can not take care of its own area never mind adding Victoria to it. They are looking at this as a cash cow for themselves.

The area of Victoria Beach is a summer beehive of more than 10,000 people as a summer resort. It has never had to borrow from this or any Government. It has been completely self sufficient though out its existence. To place it into the RM of Alexander would take the majority of monies away and would also greatly down size services and support for this community. Policing which is an important factor would be dropped off to almost nothing. Municipal workers would no longer be taking care of this area, but be spread out and hence reduce services greatly. Representation on the Council of RM of Alexander would be reduced to one only representative for 10,000 + people, as compared to other much smaller areas.

Money provided by the Victoria RM would be eaten up by other areas and provide no support to its local area.

The Government is virtually insane to be doing this to a self supporting RM.

Consider this a formal complaint to which I would like a response with complete and full details

as to why this Provincial government has become to against the people of this province.

I await the Premiers personal response to this.

Sincerely
Mr. T.G. Flook

* * *

Objection to Forced Amalgamation

As cottage owners at Victoria Beach for nearly forty years, we have been made aware of an attempt by the provincial government to enforce an amalgamation with the RM of Alexander.

We wish to advise that we are strongly opposed to the non-voluntary amalgamation. Victoria Beach is a financially healthy community with a large tax base, one that is substantially adequate for its needs. Though our off season (winter) population is under 1000, the total rises to some 16,000 during the summer months.

The five-person council manages a range of services, including a professional police force – which often assists the RCMP which has a very small staff covering a large area --, a fire department with up-to-date equipment and very well trained fire fighters, an excellent well trained team of first responders.

Recreational activities include a fine tennis facility (six hard courts), a carefully maintained golf course, a newly built sports centre and a facility for social and other activities geared to seniors. In season we have a general store, bakery, and a restaurant. The Victoria Beach Community Club provides an array of activities, from swimming lessons to sports activities and bridge. All these businesses and community club activities provide a lot of employment for young people.

The Victoria Beach restricted area provides a safe haven with its limitations on vehicular traffic.....unique in Canada. The narrow streets and lanes are too small to accommodate motor vehicles, the community having been built when the only access was by train.

The RM of Alexander has nothing to offer Victoria Beach. We feel that the resort designation for Victoria Beach which has been in place for many years should be respected and retained.

Dawn and Ron Kirbyson
Victoria Beach

* * *

Dear Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

We are writing to protest the proposed amalgamation of the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach (RMVB) with the RM Alexander, which would be forced upon us, if Bill 33 passes in the legislature.

The reasons for our position are:

1. It is undemocratic.
2. There is historical precedent to recognize summer resort communities such as Victoria Beach as having unique status and therefore our RM should be exempt.
3. There is no financial or administrative rationale to support amalgamation.

My husband and I were born and raised in Winnipeg in the 1950s, attended U of M in the 1970s and have been summer residents of Victoria Beach most of our lives. We inherited the family cottage in 1996, and rebuilt it in 2007 in anticipation of retiring here from May to early October. Our permanent residence is in Alberta. According to the RMVB, out of province electors like us represent about 10% of the voters. As such, we have no voice in the Manitoba Legislature because we are ineligible to vote for an MLA here. Further, we only have 2 votes in municipal elections, even though our cottage is the summer retreat for 4 other distinct family units that reside in Manitoba, in addition to our 2 adult children who will one day inherit this property.

The amalgamation plan proposed by the RM Alexander indicates that there would be 4 wards, with Victoria Beach included in Ward 1. Therefore only one Councillor would be elected to represent an area greater than the current RMVB. The interests of that Councillor could rest outside of the current RMVB, they could be a permanent resident, or they could be a seasonal cottage owner outside of the summer vehicle restricted area that makes up the core of Victoria Beach. Therefore, we have no assurance that a Councillor will be elected that truly represents the interests of some 700 summer cottages in the restricted area, like us. Our current RMVB complement of 4 Councillors and the Reeve ensures a balance of representation between the diverse needs and desires of permanent, seasonal, restricted and non-restricted area residents.

The current RMVB council is elected in the summer because of our special resort status dating back to the 1930s that prior legislation was sensible enough to recognize. Amalgamation would mean an October

election. As out of province voters, we would not be able to attend election forums or participate meaningfully in the election process. RMVB holds open Council meetings in the summer so that seasonal cottagers can attend and participate in local governance. Winter meetings are held in Winnipeg where most seasonal cottage owners and some Councillors reside.

My observation is that the elected Councillors actually volunteer much of their time because they care so deeply about this community. The monetary compensation they receive (\$560 per month for Councillors and \$660 per month for the Reeve, as well as an indemnity for meetings of \$75.00 for a half day and \$150.00 for a full day) probably does not come close to the average pay for many elected Councillors in Manitoba. If amalgamation occurs, I believe it will be much more difficult to attract Councillors, especially those representing seasonal property owners, to stand for election. Requiring these Council members to be on top of, and make informed decisions about, all of the complex issues in a combined municipality is unrealistic. This would also disadvantage the community of VB, further marginalizing its needs due to a lack of "voice". It's not just a matter of paying Councillors a salary. How could the summer resort of Victoria Beach be adequately represented? For example, Council meetings would occur in St George within the combined municipality, necessitating travel in the off season, rather than meeting in Winnipeg. Also, public Council meetings at Victoria Beach in the summer would be eliminated.

In addition to representing permanent residents, we believe the RMVB has done an excellent, cost effective job of representing cottage property owners, managing the affairs of the seasonal resort area, collaborating with other RMs on service delivery, and engaging in long-term planning. For example, our local VB police force not only enforces provincial laws but also municipal bylaws that have been carefully crafted to preserve and respect the unique cycle and pedestrian atmosphere of this wonderful place.

The RMVB has also taken a leadership role in such important issues as shore line protection and supporting the clean-up of pollutants in Lake Winnipeg. VB is not dependent on other levels of government and files reports, on time, as required by the province. To date, the Province has not demonstrated any financial rationale or need for administrative efficiency to support amalgamation.

The RMVB maintains access roads year round. The beautiful beaches, trails, golf course, tennis courts and so forth are publicly accessible by all – whether cottage owners, renters, visitors to cottages, or simply folks driving out from Winnipeg for a day of sunbathing and swimming on the beach. Unlike provincial parks such as Grand Beach, the province has no expense for providing public beach recreation opportunities to Manitobans here – rather it is born by the mostly seasonal tax payers in RMVB, like us. Unless under provincial management, most of Manitoba's prime recreational shoreline in other resort areas is not publicly accessible, but is controlled by individual property owners.

It is unjust and simply wrong that the basis for amalgamation is 1,000 permanent residents, and not 1,000 tax payers. My husband and I are deeply concerned that with amalgamation, out-of-province property owners like us will have no or little voice on matters that really concern us. It is the uniqueness of this place, rooted in 100 years of tradition, and an impassioned volunteer spirit that keep us committed and coming back year after year.

We count ourselves incredibly privileged to be able to do so and intend to continue to tie our children and grandchildren, nieces, nephews and friends to a deep love and appreciation for this place, providing we have the assurance of a meaningful voice in self-governance.

We truly believe in supporting the local economy. Not only do we pay over \$6000 in annual property taxes, we contribute to the local economy while we are here, purchasing from local merchants, fishers and produce farmers as well as hiring local service providers...all of whom contribute to provincial business tax revenue. We willingly pay provincial sales, gasoline, and liquor taxes. We support arts events in Manitoba like the Winnipeg Folk Festival and the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Our many out-of-province guests inject further dollars into the local economy. When we rebuilt our cottage, we spent a quarter of a million dollars on local trades, contractors and the purchase of building materials because we want to be here for the long term.

We are strong supporters of the Lake Winnipeg Foundation, whose mandate it is to clean up Lake Winnipeg. We donate to this organization and advocate for Lake Winnipeg clean-up both in Manitoba and in Alberta where the Elbow, Bow and Saskatchewan rivers, that eventually feed into Lake Winnipeg, originate.

We are asking for a simple amendment to Bill 33 – either exempt historical summer resort communities from the requirement to amalgamate unless they choose to, or change the definition of the municipal threshold from 1000 permanent residents to 1000 permanent residents and/or 1000 electors, tax payers or some other more fairly representative definition.

Victoria Beach has a very special place in the history of Manitoba – it continues to reflect core values of family, community, healthy recreation, respect for environment, and volunteerism. Manitoba Legislature, please don't erode our right to retain our traditions for future generations. Continue to allow us to operate as a distinct rural municipality, as we see fit, without forced amalgamation.

Thank you

Karen and Gordon Paul

* * *

I am writing in opposition to Bill 33 as it relates to the proposed forced amalgamation of the RM of Victoria Beach with the RM of Alexander, and wish to make the following points.

Bill 33 requires a municipality with fewer than 1000 "permanent population" (read: year-round residents) to amalgamate with a neighboring RM. This requirement is arbitrary and inconsistent. Like most of the 2600 plus taxpayers in the RM of Victoria Beach, I am a summer resident and year-round property owner and taxpayer who is required by the Province of Manitoba to pay school taxes (58.2% of my combined property and school tax bill paid July 31, 2013) for which we receive nothing and over which we have no control. If we are considered sufficiently permanent to be required to pay school taxes, then it follows that we should be included in the count of residents for the purposes of Bill 33.

The peak summer population of the RM of Victoria Beach has been estimated at approximately 5000 people, concentrated primarily in the restricted vehicular traffic area. This concentration has resulted in the need for and provision of a water treatment plant and distribution system, a garbage collection system, a municipal police force and a large parking lot and taxi service to facilitate minimum vehicular traffic. These municipal services are not typical of most rural municipalities, as are not the many kilometers of shoreline subject to erosion.

The imposition of forced amalgamation on the RM of Victoria Beach would be undemocratic in the extreme. At present, the requirement to pay school taxes constitutes taxation without representation, the very definition of undemocratic. Forced amalgamation would result in one representative from Victoria Beach on an amalgamated council of councilors, as opposed to the current RM of Victoria Beach council of five dedicated solely to the requirements of Victoria Beach. Such amalgamation would only exacerbate the aspect of taxation without adequate representation.

In conclusion, I would suggest that amalgamation with the RM of Alexander would not contribute positively to the RM of Victoria Beach continuing to be a strong, viable community and could jeopardize the maintenance of the present character of the RM of Victoria Beach.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Mitchell

* * *

Re: Amalgamation of Rural Municipalities

Dear Sirs:

I am writing about my concerns over the plan to force all smaller municipalities to amalgamate.

I began as a cottager in 1967 and became a permanent resident of the rural municipality of Victoria Beach in 1978.

There are many reasons why I am against the amalgamation with the RM of Alexander, but I will mention only three.

1. The Police

The RM of Victoria Beach has its own police force; the RM of Alexander relies on the RCMP. Our police chief lives in the RM full time, year round. For the six month of summer, when the population increases an additional six fully-trained officers are on duty providing us with police services 24 hours a day. They respond to criminal and by-law offences.

The RCMP in Powerview would not be able to provide us with the same level of service. They would not respond to noise, parking or other by-law offences.

When robbers from Pine Falls, Fort Alexander, or other areas, we have police present who can act. The RCMP now can phone our police chief to check out

house alarms in the Hillside Beach area of the RM of Alexander.

The RM of Alexander would not have year round by-law officers. Our municipality will not be sufficiently protected 24 hours a day.

2. Autonomy

a) Financial Issues

We have financed our municipality independently without any government hand outs for 80 years. Few municipalities can claim this. Most recently we financed a large water treatment plan by floating a debenture that all taxpayers are paying for – summer and permanent residents.

Our golf course and parking lots provide revenue for the municipality; some of this money goes to the continual repair of both. With amalgamation there is no assurance that the money will stay in the area.

b) Representation

Currently we have 1 reeve and four councillors to represent 2500 plus taxpayers in the RM. Under the amalgamation plan of the RM of Alexander we will have 1/2 a councillor.

c) Municipal Services

In the winter after a storm our roads are cleared promptly, either that day or the next. Under amalgamation, with a much larger area to cover, this level of service will not likely be provided. Currently in Alexander it can take three days. My home care workers must avoid two roads in Alexander most of the winter because of the dangerous conditions.

d) Elections

Presently our elections are held in the summer months when most rate payers are present. Under the proposed amalgamation we would have to hold elections in October. Many people would not be present to vote; they would be disenfranchised. Would Alexander mail out voting ballots so out of towners can vote? Absolutely not!

3) Recycling

The RMVB has a strong recycling program. It provides sufficient bins to collect all our recycling and transports it to a depot twice weekly. The RM of Alexander does not pick up recycling at all. Their residents must take their recycling to the dump some distance away or bring it to our recycling bins.

If our recycling bins are removed, few people will be recycling. This means that all their rubbish will be heading to the land fill. This defeats the whole purpose of recycling in the province.

It took two year to find a location with the correct conditions for our current land fill. The cost to relocate landfill is just astronomical!

I sincerely hope that you will not give Bill 33 third reading before making some reasonable adjustments for well administered municipalities like ours

Yours sincerely,
Diana E. Pennington

* * *

I would like to add my voice to those taxpayers from the RM of Victoria Beach who are very concerned, and quite angered by the lack of consultation, and the forced approach the government is taking with Bill 33.

The blanket statement that 1000 permanent residents is the magic threshold for sustainability is blinkered, arbitrary, and irresponsible. In the case of Victoria Beach, there are roughly 2100 taxpayers carrying a full load within the municipality, paying some of the highest taxes in the province, and yet we are told we count for nothing because some of us are not 'permanent residents'. Victoria Beach is a growing, vibrant community with a strong sense of history (over 100 years now) and tradition.

It is due to taxpayers, many of whom have inherited VB properties over generations, that the RM of Victoria Beach has been able to grow and provide improved services (I.E. the new water treatment plant; expanded police service; better garbage pick up). Far from being unsustainable; Manitobans, former Manitobans, and many others from all over North America return to VB year after year, and pay taxes to the municipality, no matter where life has taken them.

The reason people love it there? Part of it is due to the unique and historic character of VB, located on a peninsula, as a Resort Community (it's designation since 1933). The RM of Victoria Beach has a policy of limited development, a significant amount of undeveloped land, and control over its own roads. Control over our roads makes possible the cherished vehicle closure during July and August, making it a wonderful safe, quiet place, especially for children.

Why would such a self sustaining Resort Community want to amalgamate with another, much larger, more

rural municipality with almost no common interest; the RM of Alexander? There is no good reason, financial or otherwise to justify amalgamation. Such a merger amounts to a business takeover, or a transfer of assets, mandated by one government minister. Under an amalgamated council, VB would have a vastly reduced voice, if at all, over its defining assets (roads, golf course, bakery, store, water treatment plant, Moolight Inn, Yacht Club, Clubhouse, municipal lands, etc..) and how these will be managed in the future. Under amalgamation with the RM of Alexander, the new municipality could reduce our services to cut costs, and eventually allow for the development of municipal land to increase revenue. The future council could also have the power to repeal the vehicular restrictions, reduce the police force, the list goes on.

The "one size fits all", forced approach to mergers put forward by the government is clearly unacceptable, and at the very least, undemocratic. I would urge the government to amend this flawed Bill to at least allow for such historic communities as Victoria Beach to maintain autonomy and Resort status. If the Bill proceeds as-is, I would advocate for, and certainly be willing to participate in collective action against the province.

Respectfully,
Erik Reinart, at VB since 1967

* * *

As a Victoria Beach seasonal resident, I would like to register my objection to forced amalgamation.

I understand the rationale behind amalgamating RMs in the province who are not financially able to administer their area effectively. Victoria Beach remains financially stable and able to provide services, such as police, brush pick up, building maintenance, a golf course. and active Seniors' Scene etc.

I wonder why we are counted a full taxpayers without a "seasonal discount" but are ignored in every other aspect. If the vocabulary was changed to 'voters' rather than "permanent residents", the RM would easily meet the criteria. Having a maximum of one vote on a new council would prohibit effective self governance and put the resort we value at risk.

As a teacher, there is always an exception to a rule. Students are not allowed to wear hats in the building, but if a student wears a turban, for example, it is allowed. Why, as an alternative, would it not be

possible, as another solution, to have a 'resort designation'?

This government does not have a record of listening to its citizens and indeed, we have been insulted by the Minister. Please consider options before forcing this action.

Deborah Covernton
Victoria Beach
Winnipeg

* * *

To: The Province of Manitoba Standing Committee for Bill #33

My wife and I would like to express our sentiments regarding Bill #33. Rather than writing about each of the items specifically, we urge you to refer to the letter Dr. Phil Murray has written and sent to your committee. We concur whole heartedly with ALL aspects of Dr. Murray's submission. We reside at 477 Sunset Blvd, Victoria Beach.

We are very concerned with what Bill #33 is trying to achieve and that it seems to be imposed on communities whether they want to amalgamate or not. Historically, in some cases, amalgamation of two municipalities was needed and in doing so made their tax base larger and therefore better for the operation of their communities. This is not the case with the R.M. of V.B. We have sufficient tax base and enjoy a healthy, vibrant, safe place to live.

If two municipalities want to amalgamate and it is in their best interests for all taxpayers to do so, then we see that as a 'win win' solution to a problem. As expressed by Dr. Murray, we have a very unique recreational community lifestyle that is enjoyed by the tax payers of our community. The restricted area works well and is safe for all. If we amalgamate with another municipality and have a reduced representation on Council, we are not assured of maintaining the community as we know it.

We have not yet heard any benefits this amalgamation will bring to the R.M. of V.B. Why then does this government pursue amalgamation where it isn't necessary or beneficial to our community? Furthermore, on what basis was this decision made?

Please take time to review the parameters of Bill #33 and listen to the voice of the V.B. taxpayers. It is a poor piece of legislation and is ill thought out as to its requirements and boundaries.

Thank you!

Terry and Dianne Boyce

* * *

I am writing to the standing committee of the legislature to request an amendment to the proposed Bill 33 concerning the amalgamation of municipalities in Manitoba. As a summer resident of the Village of Dunnottar, I would request that the bill be amended to allow for exemptions under the act for those municipalities that have a substantially increased population during the summer season. In effect, all of seasonal residents pay taxes based on assessments that are identical to those paid by permanent residents. This makes Dunnottar a municipality of approximately 3,000 persons or an additional 1,800 tax-payers during seasonal months (broadly speaking from May through to October). This enhanced tax base has enabled the municipality to provide services that are unique to the village (such as its renowned poplar piers) and residential services that are above average for most smaller municipalities (such as garbage and waste water collection). By keeping the Village of Dunnottar intact under a proposed amendment, seasonal residents would still be able to vote for a separate mayor and council to govern the services provided by our taxes; an amalgamated version of the Village would lead to a watered down process whereby voters and taxpayers would have much less say on how their services are delivered.

For this reason, I would recommend that the Standing Committee incorporate a friendly amendment to Bill 33 to recognize the separate status of seasonal communities such as the Village of Dunnottar.

Your sincerely,

Del Sexsmith
Matlock
Winnipeg

* * *

Please accept this as our opposition to the proposed Bill 33.

Although we are recent cottage owners in Ponemah in the village of Dunnottar we have been visitors for over 30 years and have always been impressed with the upkeep of the community including roads, ditches, summer flowers, regular garbage pick up, recycling and sewage collection, etc. not to mention

the piers which is where we have spent many hours of our visits enjoying.

Although we were not fortunate enough to have a family cottage handed down through the generations a few years ago when we were able to consider a purchase of a cottage there was no question where we wanted it to be. This is our 2nd summer in Ponemah and we couldn't be happier with our choice. Now it appears that what we looked most forward to in our chosen community may change.

There is no way we can see our community maintaining the lifestyle we enjoy as well as employing those who are committed to our community if we were to become a small part of a larger area where we might not figure into the equation.

This past weekend we had our parents visit from out of the province. We spent a lot of time at the Selkirk Pier and my mother commented on how unusual and wonderful it was to see five generations of families and friends all talking and laughing, enjoying the beautiful day. It is not just a pier but an important connection to a social network. Two of the elderly women on the pier that day are ladies who enjoy a visit and daily swim...they so enjoy seeing people generations younger than they are and spending time conversing with them. Would an elected official in St. Andrew's be aware of how much these piers mean?

Although we are not year round residents we do pay taxes that provide us with the services we enjoy and we feel we are well served. Our particular area has a number of renovation and new home building projects going on which will increase the tax base to allow our local elected officials to continue to provide us with good services.

We respectfully ask that consideration be given to allow our community to continue to enjoy the work of our own elected officials.

Sincerely,
Rita and Lloyd Mymko
Ponemah, MB

* * *

To whom it may concern

I've been a summer resident since 1963 & I have enjoyed every minute of it & I'm asking you to reconsider your plan to amalgamate the Rural

Municipality of Victoria Beach with the RM of Alexander

As an autonomous local government the council and residents of the RMVB have maintained a fiscally responsible tax base through prudent, careful management. We are financially secure. The philosophy and lifestyle of our community have remained largely unchanged due to the will of the population

Residents are very concerned the culture and independence of our restricted area will be lost if forced to amalgamate.

Many, including myself, have withstood a high tax rate that has risen substantially in recent years. I feel it is unfair that our locally generated revenues are shared with another municipality. Your plan implies an authoritarian approach.

Our tax base of more than 2,600 taxpayers has received unfair consideration. As a community, we do not wish to be at the trough but rather stay a democratic self sustaining district. Please consider we summer residents pay 87 per cent of the RMVB taxes and receive few rights in return

In short we ask you to abandon this legislation. Failing that, please take into account our municipality's unique circumstances & classify it as one that surpasses the 1,000 resident threshold

Sincerely
Noreen Reid

I apologize for the scribble do to my arthritic hand

* * *

Re: Bill 33

We are writing to express our concern over and strong opposition to Bill 33 which requires the amalgamation of municipalities with fewer than 1,000 permanent residents.

As it stands, Bill 33 would force the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach (RMVB) to amalgamate with the Rural Municipality of Alexander (RMA).

We are long time ratepayers of RMVB. We are summer residents. RMVB has a tax base of over 2,600 taxpayers, but according to the last census there are only approximately 350 permanent residents. The seasonal residents contribute 87% of the overall tax base of the municipality, which

has over \$360,000,000 in property assessment on approximately 1,900 properties.

Our taxes support a modern water treatment plant; a year-round police service which expands to 6 members during the summer months when the population swells to 8,000 to 10,000; a year-round fire department and emergency medical responders; garbage and brush pick-up; an active year-round senior center; a year-round community center and summer community club and recreation program; and such recreation facilities as a golf course, tennis courts, sailing club and curling rink.

Because of Victoria Beach's peninsular geography, we share a boundary with only one other municipality—RMA. While we now have a council of five responding to the needs of ratepayers, we would only be part of one of four wards in the far-flung RMA, which stretches 70 km east to west and over 40 km to the south. What is now RMVB would be like a little pimple on the northwest tip of RMA—although the number of voters from RMVB could exceed the number of voters in all the rest of RMA.

Even with all the services the residents of RMVB enjoy, we have a lower mill rate than RMA, and lower administrative costs. RMVB is a fiscally sound, well managed municipality with little debt.

We urge the Government to reconsider its plan to force amalgamation on our community so that we can continue to be governed by a local council that understands and can respond to the needs of our unique resort community. Our council has done this responsibly and successfully since its incorporation in 1919.

The criterion for amalgamation should be the history of sound fiscal management. To base amalgamation solely on the number of permanent residents disenfranchises over 2000 seasonal ratepayers of RMVB. Seasonal residents are assessed property and education taxes on the same basis as permanent residents. We should count.

We would like to speak to this matter when it goes to Committee.

Yours truly,
Ronald Smith and Janet Smith

* * *

Submission to the Province of Manitoba Standing Committee, Bill 33

The Municipal Modernization Act

We are writing to voice our opposition to the forced amalgamation of the RM of Victoria Beach with the RM of Alexander. We feel strongly that the decision to force amalgamation based solely on one criteria, the number of permanent residents, is wrong. This narrow minded approach does not recognize the true nature of this municipality as it ignores the 2600 seasonal residents at Victoria Beach who are property owners and taxpayers.

We understand that Bill 33 is intended to address the issues created by small municipalities that are not economically viable. With 2600 seasonal residents who contribute 87% of a solid tax base, Victoria Beach is in reality, not small and is certainly not economically challenged. Victoria Beach is a sustainable model of a modern Manitoban municipality. It should be held up as an example to be emulated not eliminated. We are a well managed, financially viable municipality.

Many of us have an intergenerational connection to Victoria Beach. This is stable community has existed for almost 100 years. People choose and have chosen for generations to live in Victoria Beach because it offers a beautiful natural setting in a well managed close knit community with unique services designed for families of summer residents. Amalgamation will no doubt change this community. We fear for the worst.

With a large and stable tax base, our Council is well positioned to provide exceptional services. We enjoy a vibrant community with a focus on active lifestyles, volunteer driven recreation and a concern for the environment. The Victoria Beach Council is proactive in providing basic and enhanced services:

- Services include weekly garbage pickup, an efficient and well used recycling program and brush pick-up to reduce the risk of fire in the community.
- Our community police are well trained, experienced officers, who are on site and well versed in managing antisocial behaviors before they escalate into criminal activity. The use of "officers in training" during the summer months provides invaluable experience and learning for those who aspire to become future police officers throughout Manitoba.
- Our water treatment plant is state-of-the-art and is managed by certified employees. It is fully paid for by the residents of the RM.

- We have an exceptional group of volunteer-based first responders and fire fighters. We are the only Manitoba municipality to implement the Fire Smart/ Red Zone in partnership with the Manitoba Model Forest and the only Manitoba municipality to implement a Wildfire Protection Plan in partnership with Manitoba Conservation and the Fire Commissioner's Office.
- We are proud of the way our council is providing leadership in meeting the challenges of ongoing shoreline erosion and management of the RM in an environmentally aware manner.
- We support the need for communities near the lake to be environmentally responsive to the issues, regarding the health of Lake Winnipeg and our Council showed leadership in forming and promoting the Lake Friendly Initiative.

All these services would not be possible if we were indeed a community of less than 400 residents, as defined by the arbitrary criteria of Bill 33. We are not a community that needs help or saving rather we are one that demonstrates leadership, viability and efficiency.

RM of VB and has recognized seasonal residents as equal participants in municipal affairs since 1933 according to the Victoria Beach Municipal Act. Under that act, which recognized the special characteristics of resort communities, we are able to vote in the summer and elect four councillors and a Reeve. Our municipal offices are based in Winnipeg for the convenience of the majority of the ratepayers and property holders in the RM. We request that the provincial government allow the RMVB, along with other resort communities on the west side of Lake Winnipeg, to retain our resort status under the previous municipal act.

We fear that forced and unnecessary amalgamation with our only neighbouring municipality with whom we have little in common, will eventually result in unacceptable losses for the residents of Victoria Beach. Such losses include the reduction of services, loss of community assets, loss of undeveloped RM owned land holdings, loss of the vehicle restrictions during the summer months and loss of a cohesive shoreline management plan. Of serious concern is the absorption into a ward system that would result in a significant reduction of representation for VB residents and the complete loss of local autonomous governance. In short, it is clear that

amalgamation is unnecessary and offers no benefits for Victoria Beach. Eliminating this model of financial independence and success will not result in cost savings for the province.

We ask that our strong opposition to Bill 33 forcing the RMVB to amalgamate with the only available bordering municipality be duly noted at the Bill 33 Standing Committee. We ask our government representatives to be flexible in the interpretation of Bill 33 and far-sighted and fair in their thinking and decision making. Amalgamation of municipalities would best be based on logic and consensus not on arbitrary, rigid criteria.

We urge the decision makers to retain and preserve the present status of rural resort communities allowing the Victoria Beach Council to continue their established process for successful local autonomous governance and exceptional management of the RM of Victoria Beach.

Respectfully submitted

Janet and Mike Sampson

To Whom It May Concern

Dear Sir/Madam:

We are writing to you with regard to BILL 33 – "Municipal Modernization Act"

We have been cottage owners in Matlock, Village of Dunnottar, for 38 years . Our Village is a very unique "cottage resort" which is referred to as the "Paradise of the Interlake".

The Village of Dunnottar has been operating, very successfully, for over 66 years under local control. Dunnottar is rated #1 in the top 10 municipalities in Manitoba. The Village has a small debt which is an investment for future development. We have two stores; 2 restaurants; an art studio; a railway museum; and our famous piers, not to mention how well maintained the Village is kept.

Although there are approximately 600 plus permanent residents in the Village, the population swells to over 3000 during the summer months. Therefore, we are not a rural municipality, we are a village of permanent home owners & summer cottagers - who pay the same taxes!!! Summer cottagers pay for all services 52 weeks a year e.g. sewer, garbage pick up, snow clearing,

administration costs, school taxes, etc. As the Government only recognizes a Municipality registered by permanent residents - it appears cottagers are not given consideration for the taxes they (the Govt.) takes from us.

We are therefore asking Mr. Salinger to amend Bill 33 to recognize our 3000 plus cottagers as residents in our village of Dunnottar.

As previously noted, our beautiful Village of Dunnottar has operated independently and very successfully for the past 66 years – why fix what's not broken !!!!!!!!!!!

Yours truly,
Josephine & Henry Dellapenta

* * *

I am a seasonal resident of the Village of Dunnottar at the property known as 297 Gimli Road, Dunnottar, MB. I previously served as a member of council (finance portfolio) for a 4 year term, even though I am a seasonal resident. As Dunnottar is only 1 hour from the city of Winnipeg, seasonal council members can attend meetings year round. Seasonal residents make up the majority of taxpayers in this Village.

I am in opposition to Bill 33 re: the forced amalgamation of the Village of Dunnottar (VOD). The VOD does have sufficient funding through the seasonal and permanent tax base to operate as a municipality and able to keep reserve funds for emergencies. With Bill 33, only permanent residents are counted (under 700 permanent residents) but there are currently 1800 seasonal and permanent voters on the tax rolls accounting for at least 1200 properties. It is a fairly rich municipality with the majority of tax payers being seasonal residents.

I do not support the actions of the existing council in trying to annex parts of St. Andrews nor existing council's lack of public meetings to discuss the implications of Bill 33 with its residents. However I believe this municipality should be excluded from Bill 33 as it does have the ability to support itself with the existing tax base.

I am not against Bill 33 in principle as there are municipalities that should be amalgamated based on ability to function based on size and tax funding. The Village of Dunnottar is not one of the them and can support itself and the community with the existing tax structure.

I believe Bill 33 should allow exceptions for municipalities such as Dunnottar and Victoria Beach. Bill 33 should be looking at whether a municipality is financially able to support its residents, not just sheer numbers of permanent-only residents (particularly in the case of seasonal municipalities such as Dunnottar and Victoria Beach).

Thank you,

Margaret Ann Anderson
Winnipeg, MB

* * *

We are summer residents of the Village of Dunnottar and have been since 1972. For all these years we have paid our full share of property taxes, including school tax. We are not taxes as summer residents. We therefore take exception to the fact that we are not counted as residents for the purpose of Bill 33 and consider this to be discriminatory.

We ask that Bill 33 be amended to eliminate this discrimination and count all ratepayers in determining the application of this bill.

Tim and Mary Louise Ryan
Whytefold, Dunnottar, Manitoba

* * *

Dear Committee Members,

The Rural Municipality (R.M.) of Eriksdale is one of the several municipalities, that has a population of under 1000 as determined by the 2011 census and is being forced to amalgamate by the passing of Bill 33.

The R.M. of Eriksdale's population from the 2011 census is 846.

In 2011, as you are fully aware Lake Manitoba suffered a devastating flood.

Since 2009, Dockside Cove Ltd. has been developing a 120 lot subdivision in the RM of Eriksdale along Lake Manitoba. This subdivision has been put to a grinding halt as a result of the 2011 flood, which could have impacted our population with several new permanent residents.

In 2012 the R.M. of Eriksdale completed an 11 lot residential subdivision that could have been completed earlier, had the government not had so many planning restrictions. The said subdivision is

80% sold with four residences already complete with new families moved in.

Currently in 2013 we are near the registration stage at Land Titles for our 10 lot commercial subdivision, with one offer to purchase signed.

Eriksdale is very much a thriving community and is not in any financial difficulty.

The R.M. of Eriksdale has had discussions with four of our five boarding neighbors. As a result of these discussions the R.M. of Eriksdale has started organizing two committees to discuss the many options of amalgamation.

The R.M. of Eriksdale is not totally opposed to amalgamation or exploring the options of amalgamating with our neighbours, however with the tight deadlines and the complexity of having to consult with five municipalities an extension will be needed.

With regular council and already established committee meetings in place, having to find time for additional meetings with 4 or 5 others is difficult and costly.

The field consultants provide advice and leadership but it is still our CAO that has to do the majority of the administrative work and organizing.

The R.M. of Eriksdale is seriously considering amalgamating with more than one municipality, which will add to the complexity of developing a finalized plan by December 1, 2013.

The Rural Municipality of Eriksdale just celebrated its 95th Anniversary this year and we want to make it to our 100th! Given a choice we would like to remain as we currently are the RM of Eriksdale.

Sincerely,
Arne Lindell
Reeve and Council
Rural Municipality of Eriksdale

* * *

I grew up spending all of my summers in Whytewold at the family cottage. What a wonderful privilege! Our family cottage is still used by all of the family and it remains a much loved and appreciated place to be in spring, summer and fall. What happens to this beautiful Interlake community and how it goes forward into the future is very important to us. We hope for the integrity of this village and all of the community to be preserved and respected for it's

unique character which include many advantages that could be lost if the Village of Dunnotar were to be amalgamated with St. Andrews. I want to address as well, the issue of the population of the village. We feel that we are as important to the vitality of the village as are permanent residents and so should be counted in the population. As one resident, Ron Brown has said all seasonal residents pay taxes and so "with taxation should come representation." I am also disappointed in the approach our government has taken to this issue; that is forced amalgamation without consultation is against the democratic and open-minded governance I expect from the NDP party. Thank-you for your consideration.

Sincerely, Karen (Halas) Klisko.

* * *

Derek Klassen

The Reeve and Council of the Rural Municipality of Glenella would like to take this opportunity to submit this written submission to the Committee on Bill 33 "The Modernization Act." Both as members of Council and citizens of our community we would like to express our serious concerns with your plans to force municipalities to amalgamate whose population is below 1000. We feel that amalgamations should be the decision of the municipality and the wishes of its residents and not forced by the Province.

Our municipality is not struggling to survive, and has no reason to amalgamate with a neighboring municipality. We provide very good and efficient service delivery to our ratepayers, complete and file our audited financial statements by the deadline, is fully PSAB compliant, operates well within our debt capacity ratio. Within our municipality we have a thriving village complete with a K-12 school as well as many local businesses that neighboring villages with similar or higher populations do not. We have not been given one good reason to amalgamate, population alone is no indication of a solvent municipality.

Amalgamation will most certainly result in job losses and a disruption of services, which in turn will see a thriving village decline. Amalgamation will not change the number of roads we have to maintain or the resources that are required to maintain them. It will however, create a huge burden and increase workload as a newly amalgamated municipality

will have to re-establish every single policy and procedure on how this new entity should operate.

We have heard from other municipalities who chose to amalgamate and they have stated it was a difficult and time consuming, and was not rushed into without a great deal of research and public consultation. In their case their local officials together with the ratepayers made the decision that the amalgamation would be the right thing for them to do. They admit it took years to complete. However, your bill which you are rushing to pass does not allow this process to happen. Your legislation would require forced amalgamations to be done immediately, certainly not the basis to make sound business decisions or complete any type of long term planning.

Your department has sent us literature stating "the benefits from this amalgamation are many and varied"; however you have not provided us with a breakdown of these benefits or proof they exist. What studies did your department do to come to this decision? Are you going to be providing us with a copy of your studies? We feel the negative effects from forced amalgamations are many and varied and include a loss of services to our residents, with no corresponding decrease in cost to them, as well as loss of jobs in our community and potentially loss of businesses. We worry about the impact forced amalgamations will have on our school, our businesses, our stores, our restaurant, and our credit union.

Bill 33 states that we are obligated to have public consultation, but will be forced to amalgamate regardless of what the public wants.

In closing, we feel that forcing us to amalgamate with a neighboring municipality will not benefit our community but rather it will have a negative effect on it and our residents, therefore as Reeve, Council and also as ratepayers of the Rural Municipality of Glenella, we wish to register our vehement opposition to the implementation of the proposed Bill 33.

Thank you.

* * *

The Council of the Town of Gladstone has passed a resolution indicating that they do not wish to amalgamate as it is not in the best interest of

our residents and that it would deter the positive residential and commercial growth that they've been experiencing since 2008.

When elected to Gladstone Town Council, our council was concerned about the future of our town, as were many of our residents. Like many other rural communities, we had experienced population decline, loss of businesses, curtailed health services and the residential and commercial real estate values were well below market value. It was a depressing outlook and it was evident that Gladstone residents were losing faith in their community. Our council concluded the only way to recovery would be to rebuild our tax base and accepted the responsibility of doing whatever was necessary to achieve that goal. One council member actually ran on the premise to get our population of 802 (2006 census) back to the 1000 threshold by the 2010 election. Although his goal was thought to be a bit lofty, his determination and commitment to our community was admirable. None of us could have envisioned the growth and development that transpired over the next seven years. From 2008-2009 we experienced commercial development of \$9M; this is unprecedented for a municipality in rural Manitoba the size of Gladstone. We continue to work towards additional commercial growth and this is being achieved by the sale of properties in our recently developed Business Park. We have sold or have offers to purchase properties that will attract as many as 4 or more new businesses into our community thus creating more job opportunities. With the influx of immigrant families, real estate prices had increased by more than 40% and within months we were experiencing a housing shortage. Although we had been successful in utilizing all available serviced properties we were in need of a new residential sub-division. A private landowner has since developed his farmland located within the town and has made many new lots available to prospective buyers. To date, he has not been able to have these properties ready fast enough to meet the demand.

Regarding the 2011 census, we were certain our population increase was very near the projected 1000 and were disappointed when it was released and the actual recorded number was 879. Although this showed a 9.6% increase we knew without a doubt this figure was incorrect as we had been attentive to the growth as it happened. We compared this federal figure with the Manitoba Health statistics which

confirmed our calculations; they recorded Gladstone's population at 1028.

We contacted the Chief Statistician for the Province of Manitoba earlier this year and were told that only 52% of Gladstone residents had actually filled in and returned their 2011 census. This was slightly higher than average for the Province of Manitoba. Our unanswered question remains; "How was the figure of 879 residents in the Town of Gladstone derived?" Is this an estimate or a guess? It's confusing and frustrating as we try to avoid a forced amalgamation.

Due to the fact that the Modernization Act addresses only the 1000 population threshold, our council deemed it necessary to confirm the actual number of residents in our community in 2013.

The actual population figure for the Town of Gladstone as of September 5, 2013 is 1015

Our council understands the need for some municipalities to amalgamate and we hear that there are many that have already chosen to pursue this process. However, we do not feel that Gladstone should be judged on population alone, we have done everything possible for Gladstone that parallels the projected growth expectations of your government for the Province of Manitoba. We share your vision for the diverse opportunities in our province for businesses and jobs as well as the many great communities that offer a safe and healthy environment to live in. Many people choose to live in smaller communities for various reasons.

We have taken additional steps to ensure we are on the right track growing our community in a positive direction. In 2011 we hired a professional municipal consultant to carry out an internal operations review which included staff, council and day to day operations. We wanted to improve our efficiencies, update job descriptions, evaluate councils' performance and ensure that our overall level of governance was at the highest standard possible. We aspired to ensure future expectations of our provincial and federal governments could be met; working together to build our community and the province. The review was a great experience and the outcomes were instrumental in shaping a strong and sustainable municipality. Several recommended changes were implemented and we are confident that money was well spent. We also hired him to conduct a five year strat plan with our council and staff; again another successful venture with his guidance and

expertise. He has been a valuable mentor in reshaping and building our community. It's interesting that 2 years later your government has hired the same consultant (excellent choice) to work with the amalgamation process and he was the one sent to our office to discuss our plan. He is completely capable of providing confirmation of the many successes the Town of Gladstone has achieved and our future plans for continued growth. We are prepared for and eager to be a part of the economic success of this province.

A great deal of time and energy has been spent by Mayor Clarke updating our council on business affairs to reach national, international and global standards. Interestingly enough, the first tracked shipment to be sent out of country through Centre Port was from Delmar Commodities, of which Gladstone is one of their business locations. We are well aware of the economic spinoffs to communities outside of the City of Winnipeg with the development of Centre Port.

Our geographic location on Yellowhead Highway #16; within 20 minutes of the Trans Canada Highway #1 and centrally located in the province are all assets that are favourable in attracting business ventures to our community. As well, both CN and CP Railways run through Gladstone and also through our Business Park. These rail lines continue to be a huge asset to our town, just as they were to our forefathers who had a vision for Gladstone. It is because of these railways that Parrish-Heimbecker has chosen to build a grain terminal and Agro-Centre within 1 km to the Town of Gladstone. This terminal will bring an additional 16 – 20 families to Gladstone within the next 18-24 months and their company has a policy whereby employees are expected to live where they work. This development is huge for our area and it is expected that this will encourage other agro related businesses to consider Gladstone as a great location to move to.

Our council and community have embraced and participated in many government initiatives that have enhanced the quality of life for our residents. The Age Friendly Communities program is the most significant and we attribute much of our success in rebuilding our community and making it a friendly, safe, accessible and welcoming environment for all ages and abilities. As head of council and a provincial and national participant of this initiative, I have had the honour to speak at provincial, national and international conferences all across Canada. I

have always applauded our government for supporting this initiative and stand proud when Manitoba is recognized as "Leading the Way" within Canada's Age Friendly Communities and beyond. Perhaps the biggest honour of all will be this month; I've been invited to present on behalf of Gladstone and the Province of Manitoba at the 2nd Annual International Age Friendly Conference in Quebec City. This prestigious opportunity, as the only invited presenter from Manitoba is dramatically overshadowed whilst at the same time I'm working to keep our community intact and avoid having to start a whole new way of doing business, as an amalgamated municipality. It seems our council has worked very hard for 7 years to have it all come to an abrupt end because our 2011 recorded census number doesn't meet the 1000 threshold that has been deemed the magic number for a sustainable community.

Government funds were used to produce a video and feature two Manitoba towns that have excelled and are recognized as successful Age Friendly Communities. Gladstone is one of those communities. This video has now being viewed world-wide as is the interview with myself that was not originally planned, it was deemed to be information that Manitoba wanted to share to encourage other communities and countries to join this community building initiative.

What message does this send when this same community could be literally shut down because they don't have the 1000 people as set out by this forced legislation?

We are certain that our economic sustainability or our projected commercial and residential development would be no different whether Gladstone's population was slightly under or over 1000 residents.

This is not just about a number!

Amalgamation Concerns and Facts

Gladstone Town Council has held discussions in regards to the announcement of the provincial government suggesting that municipalities with a population of less than 1000 people will have to amalgamate.

A decision by the Gladstone Council was made to not pursue amalgamation at this time on the following:

**The government has not provided any specific reason why this decision was made

**The Manitoba Health numbers indicate Gladstone's population exceeded 1000 people in 2011

**Most municipalities that are under the 1000 threshold have shared resolutions and letters that have been sent to the government indicating they oppose forced amalgamation

Additional reasons it is not a reasonable time for Gladstone to amalgamate:

**With the 10% increase in population and unprecedented commercial development we have experienced during the past 5 years, we do not wish to spend time pursuing amalgamation when we need to be focusing on continued growth and marketing of our community

**Reducing our council representation from 5 members to 2 would greatly reduce the committed hours our councillors spend volunteering their time to work as economic development officers and overseeing the development of our new business park and even as real estate salespersons

**Finances and accounting are all current and sustainable

**Ability to apply for and receive government grants – major water/sewer upgrades in 2009 (approximately \$1M) completed with the financial assistance of both levels of government and reserves, borrowed very little.

**Continue every budget year with additional infrastructure upgrades without applying for government funding

**Already completed approximately 85% of water/sewer replacement – more than many larger municipalities

**Waste disposal site has a long term sustainability (56 years) report. Lagoon has ample capacity for continued growth with only a maintenance upgrade to one cell required in the short term

**Residential and commercial growth is ongoing; not just in Gladstone but throughout our trade area

**New community centre built in 2009 with provincial/federal assistance. Our swimming pool, skating rink, municipal office and public works garage are all economically viable and in good structural condition. We ensure the maintenance of

these community buildings as it is essential to a vibrant community

**Southern RHA is committed to maintaining quality health services in Gladstone and considers Gladstone the “northern hub”. We have a local stakeholders group that meets quarterly to ensure we are working towards common goals and in the best interest of our residents. The open communication has made us a stronger community and we are aware of new policies and changes within each entity.

**Pine Creek School Division is committed to quality education for our students with a focus on technology and other programs that will ensure locally based jobs; provide additional teaching jobs ensuring the best education possible for the students. This will help retain our youth and New programs and curriculum that are addressing the interest of many more students and providing training that will transition them into a variety of employment streams.

New ventures: Culinary Arts – Baldy’s Bistro (canteen, bistro, catering and competitions)

Courtyard Greenhouse and Market Gardens – Age Friendly Project

Agriculture & Technology Based courses

Gladstone is proud of its vibrant community of seniors that enjoy many opportunities and services. We see our seniors and our youth as our greatest resources. Gladstone is recognized for the effort that has been put forward to enhance our livability; we are a community working together to ensure a safe and healthy future for all ages and abilities.

Amalgamation Efficiencies that have been promoted:

**Financial savings – Other amalgamated municipalities have indicated that there were minimal savings after amalgamation took place and we know there will be costs involved in transitioning to another municipality. These funds are better spent right now on our growth and development plan we have in place.

**Equipment- We have only a small amount of equipment and have moved to tendering out projects that do require larger equipment. This is more cost effective than owning machinery that is not utilized on a regular basis

**Office – Requires same amount of staff or more qualified positions like specialized accounting which are higher paid positions. Our office is relatively

small and is full during summer months with student positions. It is inevitable that a new municipal office would be required almost immediately if we were to amalgamate.

**Council Indemnity – Our council indemnity is very low and we are not paid for additional meetings other than out of town and conferences. Councillors often alternate attendance and some events. Council indemnity usually increases with increased responsibility. Three of our councillors are self employed or work out of town and make sacrifices to meet their council obligations; if they were expected to take on additional commitments within a larger municipality it might be impossible for them to consider holding the position.

**Public Works – Already do many projects working together. Floods are one area where they work together throughout the season sharing equipment, resources and manpower.

**Taxes – Small communities have to keep raising taxes to be viable. We lowered our mill rate 10 points last year because of the provincial re-assessment and with a growing tax base, we are confident keep taxes can be kept affordable. Our mill rate is higher than some communities but we are spending the money wisely (eg. Infrastructure upgrades) which make us more viable right now than many larger municipalities

**Lack of interest in council positions: Has not been a problem to date

Shared Services

Yellowhead Water Coop, Big Grass Planning District, Westbourne-Gladstone Fire Dept., Glad-West Rec Commission, Gladstone Waste Disposal and Recycling, Gladstone District Library, Gladstone Cemetery Emergency Measures, Website, Gladstone District Community Centre

R.M. of Westbourne provides operating grants to the swimming pool and arena

R.M. of Westbourne is contracted for road maintenance services and snow plowing when required

We have two joint meetings annually to review committees and projects

We urge you to reconsider your decision for the Town of Gladstone to amalgamate with the R.M. of Westbourne. Our councils have had a good working relationship and we do not want to jeopardize that for

future years. During the past two council terms we have partnered on many projects and have many shared services as per list provided. We have been diligent and financially responsible in our decision making process, always addressing the best interests of our residents.

We held a public meeting earlier this year and provided all the information we had access to so the residents of Gladstone could ask questions and have input on the very important issue that will ultimately change our town forever if forced to do so. There was a unanimous show of support for our council's decision to keep the course we are on and to not amalgamate with the R.M. of Westbourne.

Our municipalities have two joint meetings annually to discuss our shared services and projects. Amalgamation was discussed at our spring meeting and only one council member from the R.M. of Westbourne voted in favour of pursuing it; all others felt it was best to continue as we have been as it is working well and our focus and day to day operations are still very different.

On behalf of the residents and businesses of the Town of Gladstone we urge you to consider our municipality a "Community of Interest". This is imperative to the continued growth and development of our community. Our residents have placed their trust in us to make decisions on their behalf and we feel we have exceeded their expectations.

We ask that rather than stopping the positive path we are on by forcing us to amalgamate that you continue to work with us in a positive way. We appreciate the grants that have been provided over the past years that have helped to do necessary upgrades and community projects. We have the opportunity to encourage and support other municipalities and the province to prove that changes can take place where there is a desire to recover from adverse economic conditions and once again become a prospering and successful business centre. We are extremely proud of the positive growth and development we have experienced. We would like to be recognized as a positive example of small town Manitoba. There needs to be respect from all levels of government and we need to work together towards mutual goals. We feel we have achieved much more than we could have anticipated when we held our initial council meetings in 2006. We now know, without a doubt, there is so much more that we can achieve. We ask that you provide us the opportunity to continue our

journey to making Gladstone a great business hub and an even better place to live, raise families and age in place with dignity and respect.

This decision lies in the hands of your government

You hold the power

You can bring Gladstone's great success story to a grinding halt because the stats you choose to use are incorrect and outdated or you can support us in our quest to continue to be an outstanding example of what commitment, leadership and hard work can do in rural Manitoba.

There are other provinces, watching and waiting to see the outcome of Manitoba's Bill #33. Your government can lead by example, working with, not against the municipalities of Manitoba. There needs to be compromise to find solutions to this controversial issue so we can continue working together collectively to make Manitoba a shining example of democracy and good government. We trust you will reconsider the very limited criteria, show some flexibility of this legislation and make the necessary amendments to this bill that will make it a win-win for all those involved.

Respectfully submitted:

Mayor Eileen Clarke
Town of Gladstone

To members of the Standing Committee:

Re: Bill 33, proposing changes to the Manitoba Municipal Act M225, as well as others, and the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach (RMVB).

I am writing, as I will be out of town next week during the time set aside for presentations. I know your committee has much work to do, and I will keep this brief. I will be happy to elaborate on any point. My 100+ year family history with Victoria Beach is included briefly as a post script herein.

Please, as soon as practical, simply kill the bill based on its demerits as well as its predictable devastating effect on the RMVB in particular.

Why you should ask:

1. The current Act already facilitates the Minister, and others, to propose amalgamations.
2. Bill 33 is faulty and will not achieve its stated objectives. No study, or even a review, of the

mandatory amalgamations has been made, thus forcing illogical and inappropriate merges.

3. Bill 33 has dictatorial requirements, namely mandatory amalgamations, without prior study, without intelligent selection criteria, without any hearings.

4. Bill 33 replaces the democratic process in the current Municipal Act, M225. Suggesting the Minister knows better than the stakeholders

5. Bill 33 eliminates July elections in 3 resort municipalities, although July suits the vast majority of tax payers, well over 90%.

6. In RMVB, Bill 33 will reduce "necessary and desired" services rather than improve them. In fact the services currently provided are more than adequate, all at an acceptable tax rate.

7. Bill 33 requires mandatory amalgamations based on poor Census data, rather than an inability to provide 'essential services'. RMVB is a resort area with a summer population of more than 10 times the winter population, and an assessment base about 38th in the Province. This population variation requires a very different service delivery paradigm than other municipalities, in order to be effective at a reasonable cost.

8. The current Act permits, and RMVB already shares services where synergies exist, thus amalgamation won't cut costs. The proposed 'shotgun wedding' is already having a negative effect on the long term cooperative relationship.

9. The Bill 33 boundary issue has never been true, and current mobility permits Manitobans to 'live, work and do business' all over the world, and we do.

Thank you for your time, please kill Bill 33, we can do better. I fervently hope this place will be permitted to remain the unique place it is, attracting people from all over North America and well beyond.

Sincerely,
David B. McKibbin

P.S. My brief family history at Victoria Beach is over leaf.

Brief Family History

My Grandfather, Colonel Webster, first went to Victoria Beach in the late 19th century, was on the first Victoria Beach Company board, and later was on the first Council. My mother went to Victoria

Beach from birth to death, before during and after the train. I have vacationed here for over 60 years, beginning with my escape from the '50 flood in Winnipeg. My children and granddaughters have come here all their lives, from Alberta. My wife currently serves as Councillor.

* * *

Subject: Bill 33

I am writing to you to express my concern about the amalgamation of the Village of Dunnottar with the RM of St. Andrews, pursuant to Bill 33, the Municipal Modernization Act.

The Village of Dunnottar has long been considered an exception under the Municipal Act due to the unique seasonal, characteristics of this Village. While our recent census notes a permanent population of 696, for the better part of six months of the year and many winter weekends, the population of the Village of Dunnottar rises to between 2,000-4,000 people. Seasonal residents are not exempt from paying taxes. Apparently, a dollar is a dollar when it comes to paying taxes but cottagers are ignored as a person when it comes to being counted as a resident. Cottagers are residents too and say no thank you to forced amalgamation.

In a study prepared by the Rural Development Institute of Brandon University, and used by the NDP government to justify Bill 33, Dunnottar is ranked number one in a list of top ten healthy municipalities in Manitoba. Would it not be prudent to listen to your own study and let the Village of Dunnottar continue to operate under its own jurisdiction?

The Village of Dunnottar offers a number of unique services - piers, the Dunnottar Community Club, garbage collection, grass cutting, holding tank pump-outs and road maintenance. The Village of Dunnottar is very attractive destination for Manitoba.

My fear is that, under amalgamation, we may lose services and the unique character of the Village would be lost and its attraction reduced. Our forefathers ceded from the RM of St. Andrews in 1947 for a better way of life in the Village of Dunnottar. After 66 years of success, the government has decided to destroy our Village and my question is why and based on what?

My parents have owned a cottage in Matlock for over 40 years and I have spent all of my summers and a good part of my springs and falls there. Please

do not change something that is not broken. Let the Village of Dunnottar continue to operate and carry on as an example of what can be achieved and not a legacy of what once was.

I request to amend Bill 33 to recognize cottagers as residents in the Village of Dunnottar to ensure that we are allowed to maintain our existing status and exempt us from the application of Bill 33, the Municipal Modernization Act.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Keith Middleton

* * *

Subject: Bill 33

I am writing to you to express my concern about the amalgamation of the Village of Dunnottar with the RM of St. Andrews, pursuant to Bill 33, the Municipal Modernization Act.

The Village of Dunnottar has long been considered an exception under the Municipal Act due to the unique seasonal, characteristics of this Village. We are required to vote in July, as opposed to October as is the case with the other municipalities. This ensures that the summer residents are given a chance to vote during the summer when most are residing in the village. While our recent census notes a permanent population of 696, for the better part of six months of the year and many winter weekends, the population of the Village of Dunnottar rises to between 2,000-4,000 people. Seasonal residents are not exempt from paying taxes. Apparently, a dollar is a dollar when it comes to paying taxes but I am being ignored as a person when it comes to being counted as a resident. I spend at least six months of the year at my cottage in the Village of Dunnottar and six months in the City of Winnipeg. If I travel in the winter, I spend less than six months of my time in Winnipeg yet the City of Winnipeg does not exclude me as a resident-why does the Manitoba government think it is justified in doing this?

In a study prepared by the Rural Development Institute of Brandon University, and used by the NDP government to justify Bill 33, Dunnottar is ranked number one in a list of top ten healthy municipalities in Manitoba. Would it not be prudent to listen to your own study and let the Village of

Dunnottar continue to operate under its own jurisdiction?

The Village of Dunnottar offers a number of services that are unique to us- piers, the Dunnottar Community Club, garbage collection, grass cutting, holding tank pump-outs and road maintenance. The Village of Dunnottar is very attractive destination for Manitoba.

My fear is that, under amalgamation, we may lose services and the unique character of the Village would be lost and its attraction reduced. Our forefathers ceded from the RM of St. Andrews in 1974 for a better way of life in the Village of Dunnottar. After 66 years of success, the government has decided to destroy our Village and my question is why and based on what?

I request to amend Bill 33 to recognize cottagers as residents in the Village of Dunnottar to ensure that we are allowed to maintain our existing status and exempt us from the application of Bill 33, the Municipal Modernization Act.

I appreciate your attention on this matter.

Sincerely,

Anne Middleton

* * *

Subject: Bill 33

I am writing to you to express my concern about the amalgamation of the Village of Dunnottar with the RM of St. Andrews, pursuant to Bill 33, the Municipal Modernization Act.

The Village of Dunnottar has long been considered an exception under the Municipal Act due to the unique seasonal, characteristics of this Village. We are required to vote in July, as opposed to October as is the case with the other municipalities. This ensures that the summer residents are given a chance to vote during the summer when most are residing in the village. While our recent census notes a permanent population of 696, for the better part of six months of the year and many winter weekends, the population of the Village of Dunnottar rises to between 2,000-4,000 people. Seasonal residents are not exempt from paying taxes. I am one of the seasonal residents. Apparently, a dollar is a dollar when it comes to paying taxes but I am being ignored as a person when it comes to being counted as a resident. I spend every weekend from May to

October at my cottage in the Village of Dunnottar and I take 4 weeks of holiday to spend during July and August. During this time, I spend money in the Village-using the services of their grocery stores, restaurants and emporiums contributing to both the well being of the Village and the economy of Manitoba. If the Village ceases to be and is swallowed up by amalgamation I may no longer elect to spend summers in Manitoba and will be looking for an alternative vacation destinations outside of Manitoba where I will no longer contributing to the Manitoba economy. Part of the reason for my remaining in the Village is the legacy of cottaging that was passed down to me from my grand-father and my parents. If our Village is lost my desire to remain will wane and I may elect to start a new legacy outside of the reach of the Manitoba government.

In a study prepared by the Rural Development Institute of Brandon University, and used by the NDP government to justify Bill 33, Dunnottar is ranked number one in a list of top ten healthy municipalities in Manitoba. Would it not be prudent to listen to your own study and let the Village of Dunnottar continue to operate under its own jurisdiction?

The Village of Dunnottar offers a number of services that are unique to us- piers, the Dunnottar Community Club, garbage collection, grass cutting, holding tank pump-outs and road maintenance. The Village of Dunnottar is currently a very attractive destination for Manitoba.

My fear is that, under amalgamation, we may lose services and the unique character of the Village would be lost and its attraction reduced. Our forefathers ceded from the RM of St. Andrews in 1947 for a better way of life in the Village of Dunnottar. After 66 years of success, the government has decided to destroy our Village and my question is why and based on what? Please do not try to fix what isn't broken.

I request to amend Bill 33 to recognize cottagers as residents in the Village of Dunnottar to ensure that we are allowed to maintain our existing status and exempt us from the application of Bill 33, the Municipal Modernization Act.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Gail Middleton

* * *

Municipal Modernization Act

My name is Gregg Hanson and my wife, Mary, and I are proud property owners in the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach. I am not here today to oppose the concept of amalgamation of Municipalities but rather to point out some of the shortcomings of Bill 33 when it comes to a one size fits all mentality.

My business career has taught me that in fact that mergers and amalgamations can be a valuable tool for growth and synergies "if" they are executed properly. But that is a big "if". The statistics will confirm that only about half of the synergies and benefits expected from mergers and amalgamations will be realized if some basic principles or underlying impediments are overlooked.

For example, if there is a dress store on one corner of an intersection and another dress store on another with similar inventories, strategies and target markets, clearly they would be good candidates for merger or amalgamation. But if it were a candy store and a fishing outfitter it would clearly be much harder to see how the benefits would flow from any merger or amalgamation. The point is that entities for amalgamation should have common characteristics or there are too many pitfalls in forcing them together and expecting any benefits to flow as an outcome.

I will argue the RM of VB and its only adjacent neighbor the RM of Alexander are very different entities. The RM of Alexander is primarily rural and agricultural, covering a large geographical area with somewhat less than 3000 residents who are mostly permanent. The RM of VB is geographically small and is primarily a resort community with only about 400 permanent residents but with some 2600 property owners and the summer population swells to well over 5000 to as high as 10,000 people.

Bill 33 is much too narrow in its application. The only parameter it uses is the arbitrary number of 1000 permanent residents as established by the 2011 voluntary census. Surely this is too limiting to conclude that amalgamation should be mandatory. I would propose that several parameters be considered if we truly want amalgamation of Municipalities to be a success. I would propose that the following other parameters are relevant:

The number of property owners should be relevant as they should all have some determination over the jurisdiction in which their property is located.

- The services provided to those property owners and voters.
- The timeliness and accuracy of reports submitted to the province.
- Any additional financial support required by the province.
- The debt ratio of the Municipality.
- Maybe there are others considerations.

Let me talk specifically now about Victoria beach with respect to some of these issues. Currently we pay almost 60% of our total property tax bill for education. Meanwhile, less than 15% of the property owners (permanent residents) can vote for the school trustees or enroll their children in the Lord Selkirk School Division to which these taxes are paid. This seems like a real breach of democracy to me when there is taxation without representation.

Now Bill 33 is telling this same group of property owners that we are "personae non gratae" when it comes to the determination of the future of our municipality. If we were to amalgamate with the adjacent municipality, RMA, we would account for 50% of the tax base but likely have only one Councillor on a 5 member Council since we are only one ward.

The RM of VB has a portioned assessment base in excess of \$164,000,000 when there are only 27 municipalities in the province that have a larger portioned assessment. With 2600 property owners, we are probably in the top 30 municipalities on that measure as well.

The RMVB has been a leader in implementing services to taxpayers such as recycling, fire smart program, limiting vehicular traffic, established wildfire protection. Our Municipality provides more services than any other municipality in Manitoba with no cost to the Province of Manitoba including:

- a police force
- fire protection
- medical response
- garbage pick-up

We constructed a state of the art water treatment plant at a cost of approximately \$3.5 million with no

funding from the Provincial or Federal Government. In fact the total per capita funding by the Province to VB is approximately \$30,000 per year (General Assistance and VLT Grants) which is likely the least amount of funding provided to any rural municipality. Presumably the Province will continue to grant funding on a per capita basis whether the permanent residents are part of Victoria Beach or some larger amalgamated Municipality.

The RMVB is a very environmentally conscious and socially and fiscally responsible community. Why should the Province want to force amalgamation on progressive and financially viable Municipalities?

One of the attributes of our community that is very unique is the fact vehicular traffic is restricted from late June to Labour Day. The authority to "close" Municipal roads was granted to the Council of the Municipality under provincial legislation. (The Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach Act was passed by the provincial legislature in 1933.) What would happen to this very important and unique Act if VB were to amalgamate?

I hope I have persuaded you that it would be very wise to expand your parameters under Bill 33 before forcing Municipalities to amalgamate. Forced amalgamation of Municipalities with very different characteristics can produce unpleasant and unintended consequences and result in deeply divided communities. I am sure this is not your intent.

I submit that if you considered the points I have made in this presentation you would conclude that RMVB is a very unique community operating in a very self-sufficient manner. Its characteristics and history are not only unique to this province but probably to the country. I would urge you to re-think Bill 33 as it applies to this Municipality. To do otherwise would seriously compromise a great asset of our province.

Dear Committee Members:

My family started coming to the Village of Dunnottar as renters in the early 1950's, eventually my father was able to afford a small cottage in Ponemah. My family has been coming to this same cottage for over 58 years. During that time we have

been faithful ratepayers and supporters of the Village.

Our cottage is not winterized so we only come in the summer months but still appreciate all the services that the Village is able to offer us. These include weekly garbage pick up, weekly septic service, piers erected and taken down on a timely basis, flower gardens planted and cared for, ditches, boulevards, parks and green areas mowed and trimmed all summer to name a few. We also take advantage of the local Village office to find out general information and to make inquires. Additionally, there is also easy access to our Mayor and Councillors who live in our community. If Bill 33 is passed, based on information we have received, all of these services could disappear or be radically changed. We will become responsible for our own septic service, garbage removal, ditch mowing, etc. Why are we suddenly being asked to provide all our own services when they are already covered in our tax bill?

The Village of Dunnottar was ranked number one on a list of the top ten "healthy" municipalities to live in based on a survey done for the Province by Brandon University. If Bill 33 is passed the number one municipality in the Province will disappear. This doesn't make sense. Why are we changing something that is functioning at a "top" level?

Bill 33 only recognizes 696 declared permanent residents (Stats Canada 2011). Seasonal cottage owners pay taxes and even though we don't live in the Village all year, we think we should be considered with the permanent residents, since we do vote. We care about what happens in our Village. The Sewer System Debate of 2012 clearly shows how aware our population is of issues involving our community and how involved we can become in them.

To sum up, in 1947 the current Village broke away from the Municipality of St. Andrews, and now, 66 years later, Bill 33 is forcing the two communities to be reunited. Both the Municipality of St. Andrews and the Village of Dunnottar have clearly stated that they get along well as neighbors, but they do not wish to be forced to amalgamate. I sincerely ask that you re-think the terms of Bill 33 as they apply to the Village of Dunnottar, that it be amended to allow our area to remain, as it is, a well-loved and independent community along the shores of Lake Winnipeg.

Heather Anderson

Re: Bill 33 Representation

Good evening Ministers, Provincial staff and other members of the public here to listen or present their feelings towards Bill 33, the Amalgamation Act. We, the Council for the Town of Manitou are very disappointed with this government's decision to force smaller municipalities to amalgamate with the larger ones that are located by them.

Communities like ours have been working very well with our neighbors and we already share the services that affect our rate payers; from waste management, to fire protection to giving grants to our different organizations and committees that we all benefit from. We have been working together for years and have come up with mutual understandings, agreements and friendships. Unfortunately this government is trying to undo all that we have managed to accomplish over the past number of years. Forcing two parties to work together is not generally a way of generating mutual respect or cooperation with those affected. Not only is the use of force not tolerated between the two parties, the back lash affects the ones who imposed it as well.

As stated by the AMM, some smaller municipalities are not fully against amalgamation but the unrealistic time lines that have been enforced with a "one size fits all" mentality has created undue hardship upon most of those effected. Minister Lemieux made it very clear at our Mayors, Reeves and CAO annual meetings that this was going to happening. It didn't matter how long it took; we had no choice in the matter and that we were just going to have to accept it. We have been forced to accept it but at what cost? Only time will tell if this government has made the right decision or one that will decimate the face of Manitoba as we know it.

Jake Goertzen, Mayor

On behalf of The Town of Manitou Council

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing to oppose Bill 33 The Municipal Modernization Act. The amalgamation is not needed for us here at Dunnottar.

Ray Halas

91 years old

To Whom It May Concern:

My wife and I are writing the committee to voice our objection to Bill 33, The Municipal Modernization Act (Municipal Amalgamation).

In particular we believe all cottage and homeowners of the village deserve to be counted in regards to any decisions being taken by the provincial government affecting the Village of Dunnottar as a municipality. With 1800 voters on the election list, that by itself shows the Village more than meets the population requirement as set out in Bill 33.

Furthermore any proposed amendment to Bill 33 should maintain the July election date currently written in The Manitoba Municipal Act. All the reasons for why cottage country elections were first moved to the summertime are just as valid today as they ever were.

Thank you for your consideration in these important matters.

Sincerely,
Frank and Theresa Nardella

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>