

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

Chairperson
Mr. Dennis Smook
Constituency of La Vérendrye

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Forty-Second Legislature

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

Wednesday, October 5, 2022

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

**CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Dennis Smook
(La Vérendrye)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Janice
Morley-Lecomte (Seine River)**

ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4

Members of the committee present:

Hon. Mr. Goertzen, Hon. Ms. Squires

*Mr. Altomare, Ms. Morley-Lecomte,
Messrs. Sandhu, Smook*

APPEARING:

*Hon. Reg Helwer, Minister of Labour, Consumer
Protection and Government Services*

Mr. Matt Wiebe, MLA for Concordia

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux, MLA for Tyndall Park

*Hon. Wayne Ewasko, Minister of Education and
Early Childhood Learning*

Mr. Ron Schuler, MLA for Springfield-Ritchot

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

*Bill 24 – The Real Property Valuation Board and
Related Amendments Act*

Tangi Bell, private citizen

Ernie Nathaniel, private citizen

*Bill 208 – The Teachers' Pensions Amendment
Act*

William Cann, private citizen

David Harkness, private citizen

*Linda Blair, Retired Teachers' Association of
Manitoba*

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

*Bill 208 – The Teachers' Pensions Amendment
Act*

*James Bedford, Manitoba Teachers' Society
John Sushelnitsky, private citizen*

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

*Bill 13–The Social Services Appeal Board
Amendment Act*

*Bill 14–The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment,
Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba
Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act*

*Bill 24–The Real Property Valuation Board and
Related Amendments Act*

Bill 208–The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act

Bill 240–The Jewish Heritage Month Act

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Clerk Assistant (Ms. Katerina Tefft): 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 Chairperson. Are there any nominations?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I would be honoured to nominate Mr. Smook as the Chairperson for this committee.

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

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Stook [*phonetic*] is elected Chairperson. Please take the Chair.

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

The honourable member—Mr. Goertzen.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, that's—I've only been here for 20 years. If she were willing to accept the nomination, I would be honoured to nominate Ms. Morley-Lecomte as the Vice-Chair of this august committee.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Morley-Lecomte has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Ms. Morley-Lecomte is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the following bills: Bill 13, The Social Services Appeal Board Amendment Act; Bill 14, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act; Bill 24, The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act; Bill 208, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act; Bill 240, The Jewish Heritage Month Act.

I would like to inform all in attendance that—the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment. A standing committee meeting to consider a bill must not sit past midnight to hear public presentations or to consider clause by clause of a bill, except by unanimous consent of the committee.

Written submissions—when submissions from the following persons have been received and distributed in the committee: James Bedford, Manitoba Teachers' Society, on Bill 208; John Sushelnitsky, private citizen, Bill 208.

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

Public presentation guidelines: Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in committee. In accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members. Questions shall not exceed 30 seconds in length, with no time limit for answers.

Questions may be addressed to presenters in the following rotation: first the minister responding—sponsoring the bill, second the member of the official opposition and third, an independent member.

If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they will be removed from the presenters list.

The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time somebody 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 Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

Order of presentations: on the topic of determining the order of public presentations, I will note

that we do have out-of-town presenters in attendance, marked with an asterisk on the list.

With these considerations in mind then, in what order does the committee wish to hear the presenters?

Mr. Goertzen: I'm not sure how applicable it is because we now have a lot of virtual presentations, but in keeping with tradition, why don't we hear the out-of-town presenters first and then go to the rest?

Mr. Chairperson: Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Thank you for patience. We will now proceed with public presentations.

Bill 24—The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act

Mr. Chairperson: We will be doing Bill 24 first, the real property valuation board and the related amendments act.

I will now call on Antoine Hacault. Is Mr. Hacault present?

We will drop private citizen Hacault to the bottom of the list.

I will now call Tangi Bell, private citizen.

Ms. Bell, are you—do you have any written submissions for—or, sorry, written presentation for the committee?

Tangi Bell (Private Citizen): I don't have a written presentation—everybody okay? I don't have written presentations, but I did send some visual material. I was told that it would be—there we go.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, while that's being distributed, you may start with your presentation.

T. Bell: Thank you for this opportunity to present my concerns on Bill 24, The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act, and how it relates to my property and neighbouring properties from proposed mining operations.

Bill 24 abolishes its—the Surface Rights Board and transfers certain valuations done by the board to the real property valuation board. The result of this is a diminished ability to be able to deal with matters related to surface rights which are not simple valuations.

There are a number of concerns: (1) Will the real property valuation board have individuals on the board who adequately represent the interests of those who own surface rights? It would be logical to have on the board a landowner has an oil well on their

property and who understands well the valuation of the property and the impact of the oil well to be drilled on the property. It would similarly be logical to have a landowner on the board who may have wells drilled on their property as part of a sand mine. Such wells are to be drilled so that the water and sand can be extracted.

What will happen to other issues in relation to surface rights which could have gone to the Surface Rights Board? There are important issues related to the operation of such mines and the impacts on landowners. In particular, on the surface of their land and on wells drilled for drinking water on their land, contamination of groundwater is a serious consideration here.

To be specific, currently a silica sand mining project is proposed for southeastern Manitoba. Its attached silica processing plant has gone through a separate provincial environmental assessment and handed a licence.

In June of this year, the mining company attempted to bypass the required conditional use hearing and to construct and operate the plant by proposing a new zone district.

Our municipal council denied their request—their application on the advice of the manager of regional planning, the WSP planning and our own municipal planning department. Each confirmed that the company's zoning application was not warranted and that a conditional use must be applied for and with the required public hearings.

The company has appealed our municipal government's decisions and it is now scheduled for a municipal board hearing. The proposed mining has also gone through a provincial environmental assessment separate of the plant and is scheduled for review by the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission.

The mining will occur directly on the only fresh water sources for southeast Manitoba. Over 300 double-cased 16- and 12-inch-sized boreholes will be drilled each year. This does not include the additional test holes used to confirm the geological structure. Each borehole is spaced 18 metres apart in clusters of five. After sucking up the sand and water from the aquifer and sand production declines, these boreholes are sealed and abandoned. What remains on our properties is a series of abandoned boreholes that are drilled through the till, the carbonate aquifer, through the shale aquitard and terminate over 200 feet into the sandstone aquifer.

In just the first four years of mining, approximately 1,300 wells will cover the land. Larger properties will have several of these cluster mines, while smaller properties may have a substantial amount of their land affected.

*(18:10)

Since the silica sand is found in the Winnipeg formation, the extent of sealed and abandoned boreholes can potentially cover the entire footprint of the formation, which extends throughout much of southern and central Manitoba, where it forms a regional aquifer and is an important source of water for southeastern Manitoba and the Interlake area. In most other areas, the aquifer is saline.

This mining is currently under construction—consideration, sorry, and if allowed, will impact hundreds of thousands of Manitobans.

Bill 24 must consider this impact to property and water and make appropriate specifications to protect Manitobans.

Sealed and abandoned boreholes present a problem that must be addressed by the committee. Future land uses will be incompatible at these decommissioned mine sites and be limited in perpetuity by the abandoned wells.

We no longer will be able to subdivide our properties, make space for family, lay foundations for homes and outbuildings, necessary septic systems, landscaping, ponds, dugouts, livestock operations, fertilizing, tilling; basically, our work—our ability to work the land and be sustained by the land, and enjoy the land, is obstructed.

The option of selling is not viable. Who will buy a decommissioned mine site, let alone live by a mining operation that operates 24-7? The land is devalued, along with our pastoral country lifestyle.

Sealed and abandoned wells are permanent sources of contamination to the groundwater from surface sources, because seals and casings will eventually fail. This presents a problem for abandoned boreholes on agricultural cropland and hayfields that will be exposed to agricultural chemicals and manure.

We all are aware of the Walkerton, Ontario, tragedy where manure runoff sparked an E. coli outbreak that killed six people in 2000. This can easily happen here in Manitoba, as a proliferation of abandoned boreholes increases the probability for water contamination.

Dr. Eva Pip, renowned Manitoba biologist whose research career over four decades around water toxicology and water quality and public health, and one of the first to acknowledge and emphasize water quality issues on Lake Winnipeg, provided an extensive report on the sand mining during the provincial review process.

Dr. Pip states, and I quote, impacts to groundwater unfold over long periods of time. Contamination cannot be reversed. Mistakes can affect large numbers of people, into future generations, and risks will persist long after the company is gone. Long-term accountability is absent in the future. A company may no longer exist. It may declare bankruptcy or reorganize under another name and structure. There are many such mining legacies in Manitoba, where the taxpayer is left to deal with the problem, which is, at that stage, irreversible. Consider the extreme case of thousands of abandoned and orphaned oil wells in Alberta and stranded landowners, many of whom have waited decades for restoration of their land, that has, and never will, come in their lifetimes, if at all. This is what comes when we place greater value on the quick over the enduring. End of quote.

The committee must delay Bill 24 until such time that an in-depth review takes place, and answers to proper compensation and proper protection of the rights of the landowner is thoroughly addressed, directly pertaining to silica sand mining as proposed.

If groundwater contamination occurs from the abandoned wells, who is held responsible? What compensation is available in Bill 24?

If subsidence occurs from removal of tons of sand underground, who is held responsible? What form of compensation is available in 24?

What compensation is available in 24 to landowners, where land is incompatible with decommissioned mine sites? What compensation is available in Bill 24 to landowners who are in-limited to land use due to abandoned boreholes?

The immediate need for this action by this committee is noted in the mining proposal, appendix B, page 8 by the peer review comments that observe the disregard and disrespect for the people whose wells may be affected, and I quote: Throughout the report, the treatment of private water wells and private water well resident concerns throughout the course of the project is inadequate.

I request the committee delay Bill 24 until such time as the compensation to landowners impacted from this 'enormal'—enormous silica sand mining project is considered and adequately addressed in Bill 24. I would also request that the Surface Rights Board remain under this bill to hear concerns, as it will be extremely necessary and appropriate in this regard.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the presenter for her presentation.

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Thank you, Ms. Bell, for your presentation.

This particular piece of legislation only speaks to land valuation. Surface rights and other rates remain in statute and are unchanged.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Bell, for the answer to the question.

T. Bell: I understand that, and I appreciate this.

But this is totally something different that's never been seen before in the world. This is a novel method. Never before have we seen a mass proliferation of abandoned and sealed bore holes throughout Manitoba. There is much more to concern—to consider in this aspect. I'm just asking you to debate that very, very carefully and comprehensively, and bring forward this information from the silica sand mining process, which is under a CEC commission hearing at the moment.

Until that time, I feel it would be more prudent for all of us involved that, until the CEC goes through its process and makes its recommendations, and it is before everybody, it would be far more prudent and it would be—it would help the situation, is what I ask.

I understand you're saying that the—surface rights, but there's lots to this project that is being overlooked, that was never considered in the surface rights.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Well, thank you very much, Ms. Bell, for joining us here this evening. I appreciate your insight as somebody who's, they're literally on the ground, knows the land very well, obviously, and I think can shed some real perspective on it for us as legislators.

You began your presentation talking about the moving of the responsibilities from the Surface Rights Board to the Municipal Board, and I'm sure you know we have criticized, you know, the additional work that the Municipal Board is going to need to do—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Wiebe's time has expired. You're allowed 30 seconds to ask the question.

Can Mr. Wiebe finish? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I appreciate the indulgence of the committee.

My question is simply where the appeal process is at—or, where the process is at. You had mentioned that this was before the board, and I just wanted to know if you could shed any light as to where that is at with the board.

T. Bell: The appeal process, municipally, it was a zoning—they wanted to rezone, the corporation wanted to rezone the land to a different zone they came up with—they created, that would bypass the conditional use hearing and thus the development agreement.

They cited the property in that area because it fit them perfectly, is what they are quoted in their documentation that was given to The Environment Act proposal, and they're now contradicting it. This is going before the appeal for—right now, the RM of Springfield has a current bylaw that is now being, there's another, new one coming forward. It's already passed first and second readings.

At this point, bringing in a new zone is inappropriate. So the appeal—but going through the appeal process and so forth, that will be on October 19th and 20th.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Lamoureux, but you'll have to be very quick.

* (18:20)

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I will be very quick. I actually have two questions. I'm just going to dive in.

Have you seen any impact on the sand mine on your well or others nearby, as well as is there anything that a landowner may have issues with and would need the surface land board to consider?

T. Bell: So, yes, we are seeing water contamination. What we're seeing, my neighbours and I, is our wells are—there's—some people are reporting brown water, discoloured water. Some of it smells swampy. Some of it tastes like tin. And for a—

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Bell, the time for your answer has expired.

An Honourable Member: Leave, quickly, to answer.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave to allow the—Ms. Bell to answer? *[Agreed]*

T. Bell: So, I'm sorry, how long do I have?

Mr. Chairperson: There was a total of five minutes.

Ms. Bell, you may proceed with the rest of your answer.

T. Bell: Well, that's an overlook.

So, okay, yes, we're seeing that problem. Yes, we've put forward an official complaint to the Water Branch.

The other concern, the second of your questions, that other—may also reflect to Mr.—do I call you Mr. Helwer or? *[interjection]* Okay. So that one reflects—could also reflect to you the other considerations. Now, farmers, we hate soil compaction. And this project will bring forward a lot of soil compaction. In fact, this year was so wet, if this project was going forward, well, I think you would have a lot of farmers around here in the Legislative Building protesting the plant and the project itself.

So that is one, because the project is enormous. There are seven wells that will be—drills operating at the same time, 24/7, 365 days of the year, winter, weather dependent. On those wells, you also need pipelines for the slurry to transport it to Vivian.

You then also need dewatering stations for these wells. That water will go into these dewatering—these things are as large as a two-car garage, the same footprint. Now, they are considered mobile but they're there for the life of the project. They're there for 24, 100 years, is what we've been told by the corporation itself.

So, with that soil compaction, that's really hard to remedy—the amount of time we have to put in to do that, if at all we can get that land back to producing. That is a surface problem that needs to be addressed specifically for this.

Like I said, I think the surface land board—if you had individuals on it that were knowledgeable, that are actual people on the ground, would go a long way in protecting people, in protecting the best interests of Manitobans. Is that—

Mr. Chairperson: We thank you for your presentation and answers.

Before we move on to the next presenter, I'd like to inform the committee and presenters that there is a clock in front here that you can see. Questions are

limited to 30 seconds, and we have a total of five minutes for the question period, question and answers.

Bill 208—The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act

Mr. Chairperson: We will now be moving on to the next presenter—okay, we will be moving on to the out-of-town presenter, which is on—the next presenter is on Bill 208, which is Gabe Mercier, private citizen.

Would Mr. Mercier be handy here? We will move Mr. Mercier's name to the bottom of the list.

Our next presenter on the list is Kelvon Gordon-Smith. Mr. Smith, are you in the audience here or online?

Mr. Smith is not present so he will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

Bill 24—The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act

(Continued)

Mr. Chairperson: We will now move back to Bill 24, and I will now call on Ernie Nathaniel. And Mr. Nathaniel is online.

Mr. Nathaniel, you may proceed with your presentation.

Ernie Nathaniel (Private Citizen): Thank you very much for the opportunity, and the previous speaker said a lot, so I will try and make mine more brief anyway.

First of all, the definition of this real property valuation board, I mean, I'm not a farmer, I don't live in the rural areas, but I do have friends there. And this is what's sparked my interest in this. And it will encompass applications, appeals and compensation for the appropriations act, The Land Acquisition Act, The Municipal Assessment Act and The Surface Rights Act. And that's what my understanding of it is.

Now, when Cindy Lamoureux asked Mr. Helwer, who's the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services, about how will surface rights be enforced under Bill 24, he replied, like he did today actually, the particular act talks about land valuation only. It is only the land valuation that will be subject to moving into this one entity.

Now, I think this is a good question because it seemed to have been dismissed, but it's quite important because the real valuation—The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act under part 2, under mandate and organization, it says that the mandate of the board is to hear and decide

applications and appeals under designated acts, in particular, applications for a determination of compensation under section 15 of The Expropriation Act, applications for determination of compensation under section 14 of The Land Acquisition Act and appeals under the subsection 56(2) of The Municipal Assessment Act from an order of the board of revision and applications under The Surface Rights Act.

So what I'm saying is it really does encompass quite a lot of all these acts. So it seems like a lot more than just land. And the—and in the land valuation really even encompasses all these things. I mean the Surface Rights Board is very concerning to me. And like I say, I have friends in the Springfield and Vivian areas who are very worried about the silica mining and the dangers to the aquifer and their main source of water.

So they are legitimately worried about contamination and even whether the aquifer can sustain the level of water consumption by this mining activity was evaluated by the University of Manitoba report, and there is some question about that. So any damage to the land, and not just from oil or gas as we've traditionally thought of, which is typical, but any mining activity, including of course silica sand mining, is an issue encompassed by the Surface Rights Act.

Now, how deep is the surface is a good question. A little bit more than aerating your lawn, I'm sure, but nevertheless, you know, the water is important. Putting it simply, if farmland sits above an aquifer and it's the source of water for that land. And if this aquifer becomes contaminated, for example by the silica mining, the valuation of that land is greatly affected and, I would say, quite negatively. And so surface rights are inextricably linked to land valuation.

And in my view, it is ridiculous to look at Bill 24 if you can only talk about land valuation, as if it's a standalone and it's not because all of this is included, is a part of it.

Besides the undemocratic loss of sole local control and input by this act, this move to add power to the provincial government raises deep concerns about the motivation for bill 37 and the supporting Bill 24.

To claim that Bill 24 is some kind of streamlining, it is streamlining if you make one superpower to control, you know, surface rights, tax assessments, zoning appeals, possibly overriding locals owning municipal decisions. I mean, it doesn't seem right. So,

and I—and now, and she had mentioned the upcoming October 19th Municipal Board will hold a hearing to amend the Rural Municipality of Springfield's refusal to rezone a district as MRP industrial resource processing zone by Sio Silica corporation.

Now, if, you know, the locals have been concerned about this. They voted a certain way; they, you know, did not approve that rezoning. And does this mean that the provincial government will be able to just override local people in this way?

I—and those are my questions and I appreciate the opportunity to ask them.

* (18:30)

Mr. Chairperson: We thank you for your presentation.

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Nathaniel, and for joining us virtually this evening.

So, to answer a couple of your questions: This particular act only moves the land value functions from the Land Value Appraisal Commission, the Surface Rights Board and the Municipal Board. All the other rights and responsibilities still exist in statute in those organizations. They don't change. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Nathaniel.

E. Nathaniel: Sorry. Yes, do—will the local people be able to ask—you know, intervene in those questions and will they be able to address somebody because Ms. Lamoureux asked how—what was the mechanism for those appeals for the surface rights, and I don't know if that's really been established.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Nathaniel. I appreciate the opportunity to hear your words and your take on this. I think, you know, certainly we've echoed some of those concerns in our criticisms, as you said, of bill 37 and subsequently of this bill.

I guess my question is with regards to the loss of local democracy and local say. Is your biggest concern there that, as you said, these won't necessarily be appealable, or is it that the makeup of the board and the consolidation of power and control out of the minister's office your biggest concern? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Nathaniel.

E. Nathaniel: Sorry. I spoke out of turn. All of the above, actually. I mean, it's all together. I mean—and what she spoke, the previous presenter, I mean, it really could devastate that whole rural area. This—there's a lot of danger here, and I know that she's talking about the impact of the silica sands, but this mechanism of giving and taking away power, I think, from the locals to a central body is very dangerous, and I'm not sure it's a good thing.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Thank you for your presentation and the concerns that you've expressed and just the need for clarification and appeals.

Do you think that there is an amendment that could be brought forward to improve this legislation, or do we need to sort of start from scratch on this?

E. Nathaniel: I'm afraid, I think, we have to start from scratch on this. Fixing little bits and pieces are not going to do it.

The—what is the motivation behind it? This—the streamlining—I can't buy that streamlining argument. If the people feel so disenfranchised by this—I mean, you're supposed to represent them, after all. It's not, you know, it's not for big business or for a mining company or anything. We have to look after the rural people and look after everybody in Manitoba. So, no, I think we've got to start from scratch on this.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions for Mr. Nathaniel?

Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation and your answers, Mr. Nathaniel.

E. Nathaniel: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: This concludes the speakers we have for Bill 24—presenters, not speakers.

Bill 208—The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act *(Continued)*

Mr. Chairperson: We will now move back to Bill 208.

I will now call on William Cann, private citizen. Is Mr. Cann present?

William Cann (Private Citizen): Can you hear me? Hello?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Cann, if you're online, you may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

W. Cann: Can you hear me?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, we can.

W. Cann: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: But we can't see you, so if you could put your video on, as well.

W. Cann: There we go. Sorry about that.

Mr. Chairperson: You may proceed with your presentation, Mr. Cann.

W. Cann: Thank you. My name is William Cann. I reside in the Tuxedo riding in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

As an individual, I support Bill 208, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act. As the immediate past president of the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba, I am very familiar with the efforts over the past 15 years to secure legislation which ensures RTAM representation on the TRAF board.

First, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the MLAs of all three political parties for their unanimous support of Bill 208 during its second reading. A central pillar of democracy is that decision makers formally reflect the constituency for whom they are making decisions. Currently, the TRAF board decisions are made without formal RTAM member at the table although the decisions directly affect approximately 16,000 retired teachers across Manitoba.

When MLA Cindy Lamoureux introduced Bill 208 to the Legislature, she used the example of Prince Edward Island. In PEI, four persons are appointed by government ministers. Three persons are appointed by the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation, and one pensioner is appointed by the Prince Edward Retired Teachers' Association.

Following the unanimous passage of Bill 208's second reading, I requested further provincial representation information and data from the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers, our national organization. I was informed that in addition to Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and British Columbia also have a seat on their respective teachers' pension boards.

Moreover, New Brunswick and Ontario have a retired teacher on important pension board committees. It is significant in that at least five of Canada's 10 provinces have enshrined in law the right to representation for retired teachers on their respective pension board.

Most pension plans have an array of voices around the table. TRAF and Manitoba should follow this example.

I would like to close by thanking committee members for their time in listening to my presentation. Finally, I want to stress the importance of this bill being passed without further delay.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank you for your presentation, Mr. Cann.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I thank the Chairperson, and I'd like to thank you for your presentation this evening and just all the hard work that you've done over the last—I believe this was actually first introduced back in 2006, and a couple of times since then and just really want to commend you and your whole team on the continuous efforts, and hopefully we'll see it move forward.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Altomare? Oh, sorry, Mr. Cann, would you like to respond to that?

W. Cann: No, Ms. Lamoureux said it very eloquently. We're hoping it'll move forward quickly.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Altomare, you had a question.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I have the floor?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes.

Mr. Altomare: Good. Thank you for the presentation, Mr. Cann. It's always good to hear from retired teachers because they do play an integral role in not only the education system but also providing all of the mentorship and all of the leadership that schools so desire.

This presentation and the presentation of the bill is something that needs to occur and certainly something that we support.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Cann, did you have a response to that?

W. Cann: As I said in my presentation, one of the things that I think was extraordinary in a private member's bill was that the bill was passed unanimously by the MLAs from all three political parties, and we're extremely hopeful that that will be the case in the third reading.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions from the committee?

We thank you for your presentation and your answers, Mr. Cann.

We will now move on to the next presenter. Our next presenter is Audrey Siemens, private citizen.

Audrey, are you here or online?

* (18:40)

Audrey is not present. Her name will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

I will now call on our next presenter. Peggy Margaret Prendergast, private citizen. Is Peggy available here today? Peggy is not here today, so she will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

I will next call on our—the next presenter is David Harkness. Is David Harkness present?

Mr. Harkness, if you are, could you come online?

David Harkness (Private Citizen): Can you hear me now?

There we are.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Harkness, you may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

D. Harkness: I'd like to start by congratulating the three parties for their support of this bill. It shows that the legislative process here in the North, it has not become the blood sport that has occurred to our neighbours to the south, but is still instead a way to serve the citizenry and with civility, might I add.

Over the last couple of decades in North America, we've seen pension plans evolve from being simply a burden on employers that they must bear to garner a willing workforce to a partnership between employer and employee. And I think that's a healthy thing. It does make for better relations and better life all around.

Up 'til now, the TRAF partnership has consisted of representatives from the government side and from the MTS side, representing the active teachers in the province. And while that's good, it does engage two of the stakeholders in the plan, but it has not formally addressed the inclusion of the retired teachers for whom ultimately the plan exists.

Either side could have, and in past has, opened a seat to a retired teacher, but they were not obligated to.

This bill addresses that issue, and would formally bring the third stakeholder and the beneficiaries of the plan into its governance model. This is good news indeed.

A retired teacher on the board brings the benefit of lived experience. Retired teachers live on and with their pensions as a fact of daily life, not as, when we were younger, that benefit that appears at the end of a very long teaching journey.

We know that retired teachers are legendary for their watching of finance—after all, we're old, but we're not deaf—but it is for good reason. Our TRAF pension is not fully indexed and, as inflation rises, our buying power—and hence our ability to live life as we have—is compromised.

Let me give just a couple of illustrations of why it's important to have a retired teacher on the board to tell these stories.

I retired in 2013 and have been fortunate enough to get some cost-of-living increases, but it, of course, did not match completely with inflation, as the plan was not originally set up to be fully indexed.

Times change. The annual inflation figures since I retired total about 15 per cent on just year-by-year basis, and some of my students would've said, well that is unfortunate, but it's only 15 per cent over about 10 years.

And that's when teachers around the province seized a teaching moment and deliver a quick lesson in compound interest. Using the Bank of Canada's inflation calculator, we see that that 15 per cent total flat sum works out to 24 per cent when compounded.

Fortunately, we have had some adjustments through the pension adjustment account, but recent projections from TRAF itself are predicting a 0.91 per cent cost-of-living adjustment for the foreseeable future.

Our current inflation rate, as you know, has come down to 7 per cent from 8 recently, but the cost of food is now running at 10 per cent year over year as inflation value. We haven't seen that sort of inflation since the mid-'70s when I was a student in high school out in Virden, Manitoba.

So, let's take a look at what 20 years of inflation would do, using the rates from 2000 to 2021, for an average teacher retiring today at age 60 with a \$3,000 pension. The 2000s and the twenty-teens are the two lowest average inflationary decades since the 1960s, by the way. The average life expectancy in Canada right now is about 82 years. So I figure, 22 is the retirement—or, 22 years of retirement for our mythical average teacher.

Without a fully indexed plan, if inflation followed as it has for the past 20 years, that teacher would lose 49 per cent of the buying power of their base pension. With a 0.91 COLA adjustment, you can see that longevity and a non-indexed pension are not a good combination.

Thankfully, that teacher would receive CPP and OAS at various points, both of which are fully indexed.

Some of my high school teachers from Virden Collegiate—go class of '76—are still around, and I fear that they do not have the kind of pension income that's commensurate with the incredible effect that they had on my life.

Having a retired teacher on the board to tell those stories and to encourage decision-making that will help those pensioners and future pensioners will be valuable to the board and invaluable to the teachers of Manitoba upon their retirement.

I thank you all for your support of this bill, and I wish you well in the current session.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank you for your presentation, Mr. Harkness.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Harkness, for your presentation and your time this evening. Logistically, we see how this is a really good idea. You've demonstrated that with your math skills here this evening.

And I was just wondering, on more of a personal level, having another seat at the TRAF board, what would that mean to you personally?

D. Harkness: Sorry. Well, it means a couple of things: (1) back to subbing or term teaching or some other employment, or cutting back on—well, not rent, because the house is paid for, but it has expenses—turning the heat down, eating differently, not travelling as much, keeping the truck many years longer than I currently have.

So, it has a financial effect on me so far. But we have teachers who, up to just recently, were at 111 years old. And if you can imagine how small that pension was when it first started and the effects of inflation on that, I think you have a pretty good idea of what the long road looks like.

I chose numbers that represent average statistics, and, well, many people are well beyond average. And for them, inflation is a huge issue, and for them, a

retired teacher on the board has a voice for their interests and their concerns. It is really invaluable.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions for Mr. Harkness?

We thank you for your presentation, Mr. Harkness, and we will now move on to the next presenter.

Our next presenter is Guy Hansen. Guy—Guy Hansen, possibly. Is Mr. Hansen here?

Guy Hansen (Private Citizen): I am, but it's an error.

Mr. Chairperson: So, if Mr. Hansen is here and is not presenting, we will stroke his name off the list.

We will move on to the next presenter. Linda Blair, Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba.

Ms. Blair, do you have some written material for the committee? The clerks will distribute that information and you may proceed with your presentation whenever you are ready.

Linda Blair (Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba): Good evening to you and to the members of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba, or RTAM, regarding Bill 208, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act.

My name is Linda Blair, and like the other over 10,000 Manitobans RTAM represents, I am a retired teacher. We are retired teachers working for retired teachers, and I'm proud to serve as a current board president.

There are many people to thank, starting with the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux) for bringing Bill 208 forward, as well as all of the other information that she shared regarding RTAM during the second reading debate. In fact, for those members that participated in that debate, some of my remarks may sound familiar, and I hope you don't mind a little repetition.

* (18:50)

As some of you are already aware, previous versions of the 'legislachus' were brought forward by Progressive Conservative members in 2006 and 2007, including by our current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson).

I would also like to thank the members of all parties who've spoken and supported this legislation and those who have taken time to meet with RTAM over the years.

For those of you that may not be familiar with RTAM, I would like to take a few minutes to tell you a little bit about our association and why the changes proposed in Bill 208 are so important to us.

Since its inception in 1988, RTAM has been a strong, collective, nonpartisan voice of Manitoba's retired teachers, serving their interests and advocating for their welfare. We provide support and connections for retired teachers through our 21 urban and rural chapters.

Our vision is the economic well-being of retired teachers through appropriate member services and strong partner relationships. We have developed strong partnerships with many provincial and national associations, including the Manitoba Teachers' Society, which represents teachers up until their retirement.

RTAM advocates for the needs of all retired public and private school teachers in Manitoba, which includes those retired teachers who continue to support their communities as substitute teachers. In fact, approximately 80 to 85 per cent of substitute teachers in Manitoba are retired teachers.

RTAM is also one of seven members of a Manitoba seniors coalition of other like-minded seniors groups, ensuring that our collective voice includes advocating for retired teachers.

Membership in RTAM is voluntary, and members are offered several benefits, including access to comprehensive and economic travel insurance plans, as well as access to competitive extended health and dental insurance plans.

This also includes advocacy. One of RTAM's guiding beliefs is that retired teachers should have better democratic representation in Manitoba.

One of our key objectives over the past several years has been to create a seat for RTAM on the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund board, TRAF.

TRAF oversees the pensions of public school teachers in our province, and with this bill, we will be able to nominate someone to join the TRAF board. This didn't happen in the past, despite the fact that we contributed to TRAF over our working lives.

There is a precedence for this practice in British— in Prince Edward Island, where a retiree is one of eight voting members of the provincial Teachers' Pension Plan Commission.

In PEI, the commission, and I quote, advises the Ministry of Finance on administrative pension issues and provides a forum for the purpose of reviewing issues which may arise in administering the plan. This forum permits open consultation on matters relating to the teachers pension plan act. End of quote.

While this legislation may follow the path that began in PEI, it would go a long way in helping retired teachers in Manitoba to have more of a say in their future. As has been mentioned, retired teachers continue to be a resource, not only to students, school administrators and parents, but also to their communities at large.

During the height of the pandemic, in addition to our work as substitute teachers, retired teachers also volunteered to help newcomers to Canada, including those arriving from Ukraine and Afghanistan.

We signed up more than 130 volunteers to support NEEDS Inc. and MANSO, the Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations.

We've also since started the partnership with Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre, and we are recruiting volunteers to teach their newcomer programs.

We would be remiss if we did not take the opportunity to quickly mention a couple of other issues for which RTAM is currently advocating on behalf of our members, one being official recognition in legislation as the organization that speaks and acts on behalf of all retired teachers in the province.

Secondly, members of this committee and all Manitobans are well aware of the challenges recently brought on due to rising inflation rates.

The impact of rising costs and inflation really hits all the retirees and, obviously, those with a fixed income, very hard. This especially impacts our older members, particularly those who retired in the 1970s.

RTAM recognizes that inflation itself is a complex issue, making any solutions doubly so. And by no means are our members the only ones affected by it in this province.

We look forward to continuing the dialogue with government and other stakeholder groups on this important issue to our members, as retirement income security is a big piece of the puzzle.

However, our main point tonight is that the passage and implementation of Bill 208 would be a

big step in the right direction for Manitoba's 10,000-plus retired teachers, and we thank you for your support to date.

RTAM would like to thank the committee members for the opportunity to speak with you tonight and also the members of the Legislative Assembly for voting to support Bill 208 at second reading. We are hoping that that support continues, and we appreciate the opportunity to address any questions you may have tonight.

Thank you.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you, Ms. Blair, for your presentation and all the work that you've been doing towards this legislation.

You spoke about the 10,000 members that RTAM represents. I think it's over 10,000 members now. Can you talk a little bit about if all those members are in Winnipeg? Are they sort of spread throughout Manitoba? Just a little bit more about that membership.

L. Blair: Okay. Our membership is close to 15,000, actually, and it encompasses teachers who have taught in Manitoba. They reside numerous places, okay. I was chair of the wellness committee and, as chair—and of course we couldn't have in-person events, and we had online ones—we had people from Ontario, BC, Alberta, all attending. Yes, they reside all over the place.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Thanks, Ms. Blair, for coming tonight and giving us your presentation. And congratulations on the hard work of RTAM over the years. I know it's been quite some time since I've been working with RTAM and all of your executive members and retired teachers, of course.

And, again, kudos to the MLA for Tyndall Park and look forward to seeing this get through committee stage tonight and moving forward.

Mr. Altomare: Thank you, Ms. Blair. This is a—

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry. I should have asked Ms. Blair to respond. My fault.

Ms. Blair?

L. Blair: I'll just say thank you. I look forward to meeting with you.

Mr. Altomare: I'll just say that I look forward to third reading.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Blair.

We will now move to the presenters that were not present when they were first called.

Antoine Hacault? Is Mr. Hacault present? Mr. Hacault is not present. His name will be taken from the list.

Gabe Mercier. Is Gabe Mercier present? Gabe Mercier is not present. His name will be taken from the list.

Kelvon Gordon Smith. Is Mr. Smith present? Mr. Smith will be taken from the list.

Audrey Siemens. Audrey Siemens is not present. She will be taken from the list.

Peggy Prendergast. Is Peggy Prendergast present? Peggy Prendergast is not present. She will be taken from the list.

This concludes the list of presenters I have before me.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: In what order does the committee wish to proceed with clause-by clause consideration of these bills?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I wonder if it would be allowable or acceptable by the committee if we do Bill 14 first and then go in numerical order, because we have officials from Manitoba Public Insurance here who I'd like to perhaps join behind us, in case there's technical questions regarding MPI and the corporation that are asked by members of the committee.

I'm promised by my critic that there'll be only one question, so I'm going to hold them to that.

* (19:00)

Mr. Chairperson: It has been presented that we would take Bill 14 first. Is that—and then proceed in numerical order. Is that agreed by the committee? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 14—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment,
Highway Traffic Amendment and
Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation
Amendment Act**

Mr. Chairperson: We will now proceed with clause by clause of Bill 14.

Does the minister for—responsible for Bill 14 have an opening statement?

An Honourable Member: Only to thank officials—

Mr. Chairperson: The Honourable Mr. Goertzen.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): You know, yes, as a new member, I've made that mistake.

Only to thank officials with Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. I know there's work under—being undertaken regarding new technology and the way in which consumers want to access their insurance products, and that's a large part of what this bill is about.

And as new technology comes on stream, I'm sure that Manitobans will look forward to the ability to do things online and to have things like electronic driver's licences—although I know that that's a ways away, yet.

But a lot of those opportunities—and this bill sets the stage for those things to happen when the technology catches up to the bill.

So, with that, I look forward to going through stage—or clause by clause and hearing the question from my critic.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for those words.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Bill 14 makes changes to The Drivers and Vehicles Act, The Highway Traffic Act, as well as The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act.

Of particular interest to us is the changes Bill 14 makes that allow blanket insurance for ride-sharing companies. These changes allow for billion-dollar out-of-province companies to benefit off the backs of regular Manitoba MPI ratepayers.

This government has repeatedly made decisions that leave MPI ratepayers worse off. For example, MPI proposed moving some transactions online to save ratepayers money, but the PC government interfered so that their insurance buddies received a cut.

This interference resulted in Manitoba highway—Manitoba having to pay more. As well, the PC government approved a \$125-million transfer from MPI's reserve to offset their shortfall on the administration of the driver vehicle act. The ratepayers then lost a

whole 10 per cent rebate, costing them hundreds of dollars.

Rather than passing legislation such as Bill 14, I would urge the minister and his government to prioritize the needs of MPI ratepayers.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member for his statement.

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

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

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clauses 1 and 2—pass; clauses 3 through 5—pass; clauses 6 through 8—pass; clauses 9 through 13—pass; clauses 14 through 18—pass; clauses 19 and 20—pass; clauses 21 and 22—pass; clauses 23 through 26—pass; clauses 27 through 30—pass; clauses 31 through 33—pass; clauses 34 through 36—pass.

Shall clause 37 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Sandhu: My question is on this. I just want to know how the blanket insurance works and want to know what, if there—any, costs will be to ratepayers of MPI.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm advised by MPI officials there's no impact for MPI ratepayers in general for virtually all classes of vehicles. When it comes to the rates that'll be charged for those with ride sharing, it would be subject to the PUB and taxicab coalition, which I suspect is probably where some of the concerned alliance would be interveners within the PUB application.

Mr. Sandhu: Still, I just want to know how to blanket insurance works.

Mr. Goertzen: So, I understand the member opposite had a pretty detailed briefing on this before, and we could always offer him another one, but just at a

higher level, there would be a blanket insurance rate applied to, as an example, Uber, based on their experience and based on their claim experience, so it would be applied as a blanket to that individual entity based on their claim experience. But, again, it would be subject to approval by the PUB.

Mr. Sandhu: So the blanket insurance will be adjusted every year going through Public Utilities Board?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Hearing no further questions, clause 37—pass; clauses 38 and 39—pass; clauses 40 through 42—pass; clauses 43 and 44—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 13—The Social Services Appeal Board Amendment Act

Mr. Chairperson: We will now move on to Bill 13.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 13 have an opening statement?

* (19:10)

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I'm very pleased to be here tonight with officials from my department to talk about the Social Services Appeal Board, which will enable the board to hear and decide appeals in a more effective and timely manner and allow the board to focus its resources on appeals relating to critical benefits and access to services that are necessary to the well-being of vulnerable Manitobans.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for her comments.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Mr. Chair, the critic is unable to attend tonight, so I am in her place.

Bill 13 amends the Social Services Appeal Board act. Bill 13 makes concerning changes such as allowing written appeals to be heard by a single member of the board, rather than three members. Bill 13 also grants the board the authority to dismiss appeals they consider frivolous or vexatious. These changes are concerning to us, Mr. Chair.

Many applicants to the social service programs are vulnerable Manitobans who may find the bureaucracy of government difficult to navigate and intimidating.

An appeal board allows the eligibility decisions of government to be given a sober second look. Sadly, this government is watering down these provisions. We are worried that allowing the board to dismiss appeals will create an avenue to silence the voice of Manitobans.

The changes laid out in Bill 13 do not seem necessary, as the government has not provided any evidence that the appeal board here is vexatious—appeals. Furthermore, this is not the first time the PCs are making regressive changes to the appeal board. In 2018, they stripped the ability of the board to make decisions based on a person's charter rights.

Fortunately, Mr. Chair, it is not too late to withdraw Bill 13 and I urge the government to do so.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member for his statement.

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

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

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clauses 1 and 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clauses 5 through 8—pass; clause 9—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 24—The Real Property Valuation Board and Related Amendments Act

(*Continued*)

Mr. Chairperson: We will now move on to Bill 24 clause by clause.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 24 have an opening statement?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): This bill will amalgamate the land value functions of the Land Value Appraisal Commission, The Surface Rights Board and the assessment and appeal function of the municipal boards. It will provide a role in function similar to those, but only for land valuation and land value disputes.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for that comment—those comments.

Mr.—or, sorry. Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Thank you for the committee for bearing with me, and I appreciate the opportunity to put some words on the record with regards to Bill 24.

Bill 24 is a direct consequence of last year's bill 37, The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act.

Reeves and mayors warned this government that bill 37 unnecessarily took authority away from local decision makers. They also warned that bill 37 would create more red tape and create more appeals that would then be made to the Municipal Board.

Bill 24 is an obvious confirmation of those warnings. Bill 24 takes away the responsibilities of the Municipal Board to hear assessment appeals and hands it to a new real estate valuation board, meaning there are now two boards to handle the work of municipal assessment and planning where before there was just one.

The government is effectively conceding that their bill 37 is creating more appeals and threatens to backlog the Municipal Board. During question period earlier this year, the Minister of Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke) suggested that she heard no concerns with regard to bill 37. Well, we beg to differ.

Communities have told us consistently that they oppose the loss of local autonomy. They are concerned about the risk of appeals bogging down the development process. And it's clear that Bill 24 is just a further admission that this is likely to become an issue unless actions are taken.

Like to thank all the presenters for contributing their voices and perspectives, and by coming to speak to us to give us perspective on this important issue and contributing to the democratic process.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: I'd like to thank the member for his words.

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

Also, if there is agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to

pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clause 1—pass; clauses 2 through 4—pass; clauses 5 and 6—pass; clauses 7 through 9—pass; clauses 10 through 12—pass; clauses 13 through 16—pass; clauses 17 through 19—pass; clauses 20 through 24—pass; clauses 25 through 28—pass; clause 29—pass; clause 30—pass; clause 31—pass; clause 32—pass; clause 33—pass; clause 34—pass; clause 35—pass; clause 36—pass; clauses 37 through 39—pass; clauses 40 and 41—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

* (19:20)

Bill 208—The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act (Continued)

Mr. Chairperson: We will now move to Bill 208.

Does the bill's sponsor, the honourable member for Tyndall Park, have an opening statement? The honourable member for Tyndall Park, or Ms. Lamoureux, can have her opening statement.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'll keep my remarks short here. I know I've spent a lot of time talking about this piece of legislation inside of the Chamber, and I just really want to express my appreciation to the presenters who came out this evening to present on the legislation as well as to my colleagues.

I recognize we still have to bring the legislation back into the Chamber, Mr. Chairperson, but I do think it's very telling that all parties can work together on pieces of legislation, and I find that to be very encouraging and appropriate on World Teachers' Day.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member for those words.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 208?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to commend the member for bringing forward this bill. I think we'd spoke about this in the spring. It's one of the best things about this Legislature, when private members bring forward bills and all parties can agree upon it.

I know that government traditionally passes bills, but we've always said and this government has said that there's no monopoly on good ideas. And this is an

idea that's been around for quite a while, but it took the member opposite to bring this forward in an initiative, and I want to commend her for her work. It's a legacy piece for her, although she's got a long time left in politics, I'm sure. But I think she should be congratulated for this.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for those words.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 208.

The bill does amend The Teachers' Pensions Act to add two members to the TRAF board and stipulates that one of the two new members be a nominee of the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba.

Manitoba NDP supports teachers who are currently in the education system and those who are taking their much deserved retirement. We want Manitoba's educators to be able to retire and enjoy their savings after years of dedicated service. Our goal is to support Manitoba teachers as they plan for retirement and ensure that Manitobans can enjoy said retirement.

Our NDP team recognizes the important of having strong public pensions that provide stable, guaranteed returns for Manitobans, Mr. Chair. Unfortunately, this current government has fought with workers and organized labour since forming government in 2016: zero, zero and zero. All of those things have direct impact on pensions. We know that, especially when we come to actually collect those pensions. It is very important that we ensure proper relations.

Mr. Chair, as you know, this is not a light subject. This is something that impacts—daily—Manitobans and this is something that needs to be put on the record. And I appreciate the opportunity to put these words on the record because they are important. They affect Manitoba lives every day.

Thank you to all the presenters for contributing their voices and perspective by speaking to this important issue and contributing to the democratic process.

Thank you again, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member for those words.

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

Shall clause 1 pass?

Sorry about that; I didn't put my microphone on. We thank the member for those words.

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

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 240—The Jewish Heritage Month Act

Mr. Chairperson: We will now move on to the next bill in front of us, Bill 240, The Jewish Heritage Month Act.

Does the bill's sponsor, the honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot, have an opening statement?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

You may proceed with your opening statement.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): What an honour, indeed, to be the individual who could sponsor this piece of legislation. Bill 240, The Jewish Heritage Month Act proclaims the month of May of each year as Jewish Heritage month. As the Jewish community has contributed much to this province, to this country, it is, indeed, a great time to be recognizing them with this honour, and I would like to thank all my colleagues in the Legislature for getting on board and passing this unanimously, and let's move this on to third reading.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank Mr. Schuler for those words.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 240?

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): This bill proclaims the month of May of each year as Jewish Heritage Month, provides us with a great opportunity to review the story of the Jewish Manitoba experience and recognize the contributions that Jewish people have made to our province and continue to make.

This bill is also an opportunity to reiterate the Manitoba NDP's commitment to fight antisemitism. We encourage and support the Jewish community as they continue to practise their faith and culture in this province.

The first Jewish people to settle permanently in Manitoba did so in 1877, and they soon established themselves in farming communities and as railroad workers. Since then, thousands of Jewish people have come to Manitoba and have become an integral part of our culture and society. However, we know that Jewish people in Manitoba weren't always welcome with open arms; antisemitism in Manitoba has been a reality since Jewish people first arrived.

It's incumbent upon us to take action to combat antisemitism in all its forms. One way to combat antisemitism, Mr. Chair, is by recognizing the culture and contribution of Jewish people in our province, which is what the Jewish Heritage Month Act aims to do.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your words, Mr. Altomare.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement? Nobody else wishes to make a statement.

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

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes the business before the committee tonight.

The hour being 7:30, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 7:30 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Re: Bill 208

The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS), representing more than 16,600 public school teachers across the province, is pleased to comment on Bill 208, The Teachers' Pension Amendment Act which seeks to add two members to the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund (TRAF) board of which one must be a nominee of the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba (RTAM) Inc.

Our comments will focus on the following areas:

1. Ensuring democratic representation of retirees,
2. Drawing on a recognized body to make the recommendation,
3. Reinforcing the purpose of the TRAF board, and
4. Maintaining board balance.

Ensuring democratic representation of retirees

A main principle of democracy is that those who are involved should be represented by having a voice at the table.

For many years, retired teachers—the primary beneficiaries of TRAF, were represented on the TRAF board. However, a change in government resulted in a loss of this representation and with it the ability for retired members to formally raise concerns and issues related to their pension. The Prince Edward Island's Teachers Pension Plan Act has enshrined the right of representation for retired teachers in law by stipulating that one member of the teachers' pension board must be a pensioner, appointed by the Prince Edward Island Retired Teachers' Association.

The Government of Prince Edward Island saw value in this approach and was the first province to take this step. It's important to note that not all provinces can adopt this approach based on the different pension models, or there might be more examples to point to.

Nevertheless, representation on the TRAF board for retired teachers supports the main principle of democracy. Enshrining this representation in the Act ensures the continuation of representation, regardless of changes in government.

Drawing on a recognized body to make the recommendation

RTAM represents more than 10,000 retired teachers across Manitoba (approximately 63 per cent) and is the only recognized body for retired teachers in our province.

The Society supports the idea that the retired member on the TRAF board should be nominated by RTAM. This is a democratic process and ensures that the retired member is not tied to the government of the day.

Reinforcing the purpose of the TRAF Board

As defined in the TRAF Code of Conduct under Duty of Loyalty, "a Trustee's fiduciary duty to act solely in

the interest of TRAF, including but not limited to, situations where acting in the interest of TRAF conflicts with the personal interest of the Trustee or the interest of any third party to whom the Trustee may owe a separate and distinct duty."

We are here to administer and oversee the Act, not change it. This is something that the current board understands and accomplishes very well. We expect that this duty will be understood and adhered to by all new additions to the board.

Maintaining board balance

TRAF is funded through member contributions, investment income and deposits from the Province of Manitoba. While members and the province contribute equally to the fund, they are not equally represented at the board table.

Currently the TRAF board is comprised of seven members - three nominated by The Manitoba Teachers' Society and four from the general public. The public representatives are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Bill 208 proposes adding two members to the TRAF board. One will be a nominee of the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba Inc. and the other will be a member from the general public (appointed).

If this legislation passes as written, the new board will be comprised as follows:

Five from the general public

Three from MTS

One from RTAM

MTS does not object to the makeup of the board as it currently proposed in Bill 208. However, as this bill goes through the committee stage where amendments are possible, it must be made clear that MTS will oppose losing a seat in favour of granting one to RTAM or any other organization.

James Bedford
Manitoba Teachers' Society

Re: Bill 208

I would like to applaud and thank all members of the Legislature for their support of Bill 208. This is a Bill that assures all retired teachers in Manitoba that they have representation by a RTAM-nominated member on the Teachers Retirement Allowances Fund Board which makes recommendations to the Government affecting our Pension and COLA. The Retired Teachers Association of Manitoba have presented their request for such representation for two decades and have made their wish known to all three political parties in that time. It is a credit to the democratic system that unanimous support has occurred .

As a Manitoba teacher for many decades and a member of the RTAM Executive for 16 years, I am very confident that this recognition in Bill 208 will be very well received by the 10,000 retired teachers of this province. RTAM acts on behalf of its members and all retired teachers. Well done, Legislators!

John Sushelnitsky

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>