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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 13 December 1999

Lundi 13 décembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 13 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 13 décembre 1999

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP, CULTURE AND RECREATION PUBLICATION

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Today I rise in this House to show how this government provides unreliable information to the people of Ontario.

I have a cover letter with a booklet from Minister Johns stating how the effective use of information technology would have a strong, positive impact on voluntary organizations. She has sent me this booklet that in turn I am to send to organizations in my constituency. The book is called *Moving Your Group On Line*, published and printed by the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. According to Minister Johns's letter, this guide will be a valuable tool in helping volunteer groups to work more effectively.

I will not be promoting or handing out this ministry's publication because of a disclaimer on the back of the book. This disclaimer states that the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation and the government of Ontario are not responsible for what is in the book. The ministry says it's providing this information for the people of Ontario, and this guide is touted as the government of Ontario's commitment to helping the volunteer sector and its organizations. Yet they have misled volunteer organizations by providing information that the ministry says is unreliable. I believe that volunteer groups should be provided reliable information that they can depend on and trust.

If the ministry publishes and writes a book but is not responsible for the currency or accuracy of it, then why did they publish it in the first place?

SCHOOL PRAYER

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): In the spring of 1996 I put forward a private member's resolution in this House, a resolution that emphasized the importance of being able to express one's spiritual expression in our public schools. Regardless of what religion, time should be set aside each day for prayer and reflection.

You can imagine my concern when I learned that three judges of the Ontario Court of Appeal recently overturned a lower-court ruling and barred the reciting of Christian prayers at council sessions in Penetanguishene. Whether at town councils or in our schools, I strongly believe in the necessity to have some defined time set aside for daily spiritual expression.

We have in Ontario different religions, and the children in our schools deserve the right to worship in whatever way they choose. I believe the banning of Christian prayers, or spiritual expressions of any kind, in schools or in council meetings is a loss to our wellbeing. After all, this has been a part of our heritage since the beginning of time.

The importance and need of spirituality is increasing. Just take a look at the society in which we live. People don't feel safe to walk on our streets alone at night; some kids bring weapons to school just to protect themselves; rapists terrorize entire neighborhoods.

As we approach a new millennium, let us take a moment to reflect on the moral standards that we've witnessed from the beginning of this century and compare them to 1999. Let's stand up to this trend of moral and ethical decay, and reverse its growth. Let's stand up for the traditions and the values that have determined who we are today, so that we can rest assured with whom we'll become tomorrow.

MUNICIPAL TAXATION

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rose-dale): Today I rise today to defend the rights of Ontario municipalities, rights that are being severely compromised by the Mike Harris government.

The Harris government likes to portray itself as a tax-fighting government, but the real story is that its political agenda simply downloads the responsibility for tax increases to local governments. It's not that they don't raise taxes, it's just that they never have to bear the bad news themselves.

A few years ago, this government amended the Planning Act, allowing developers to go over the heads of municipal governments directly to the OMB. As a result, municipalities across the greater Toronto area are now forced to spend millions of tax dollars on lawyers to defend their legitimate claims before the board—not services, but lawyers.

Now, we all know that there is only one source of funding at the municipalities' disposal—that's property

taxes. The municipalities are forced to raise these taxes to defend themselves against the government's good friends in the development industry.

Indeed, the township of Uxbridge will be forced into double-digit tax increases to pay for their lawyers. The Harris government is responsible for this tax increase. But the saddest part of the story is that the government is forcing municipalities to raise taxes to protect the environment. Uxbridge has to raise taxes to fight against development on the Oak Ridges moraine. I doubt you'll find that in the Blueprint.

None of this should come as a surprise. After all, this government has shown nothing but contempt for local governments and local democracy since the day it assumed office.

I call on the government to set up a fund to pay municipalities' legal bills for OMB hearings. Of course, they have another option. They could take our advice and provide a comprehensive policy to protect environmentally sensitive areas like the Oak Ridges moraine.

ELLWOOD MADILL

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I rise today to pay tribute to Ellwood Madill, a community leader in my riding who passed away on December 5. Mr. Madill was a long-time political representative who was well respected in the Dufferin area.

Mr Madill enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1942 and served as a flying officer in Canada and England until 1945. Following the war, Mr Madill moved to Mono and had a successful career with Mutual of Canada insurance. He later established Madill Financial Services in the town of Mono, a family business that is still operated today.

1340

In the 1960s our community elected Mr Madill as the federal Conservative member of Parliament, where he served three terms for the people of my riding. In local politics, he has also served as a councillor and deputy reeve of the town of Mono. He was elected as warden of Dufferin county and has served on numerous community committees.

Mr Madill was a life member of the Orangeville branch of the Royal Canadian Legion and the Orangeville Lions Club, a director of the Maple Cattle Breeders Association, as well as an active supporter of the Orangeville Fall Fair.

Mr Madill is survived by his wife, Thelma, his son, Grant, and daughters Patricia and Janet. He will be missed by his six grandchildren, his two brothers, Robert and Tom, and his sister, Mildred.

I welcome the opportunity today to rise and offer my sympathy to the family. I know I speak for many in my riding when I say that my community has lost a great community leader, friend, business owner and devoted family man.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to point out another major flaw and problem in Bill 25, the mega-omnibus bill this government is going to ram through the Legislature sometime this week. Today we begin debate on this bill, a bill that impacts many municipalities in a very significant way across this province.

What the government has left out is any reference to transitional funding for the communities that are affected. As you know, in the city of Toronto there was transitional funding to the tune of \$250 million. Similar funding has been provided across Ontario.

The special adviser, Mr O'Brien, recommended \$10 million for Hamilton-Wentworth. By our calculation, based on the Toronto formula, Hamilton-Wentworth should receive \$50 million in transitional funding if you are going to ram this bill through the Legislature in this week, as you plan to do. If this is not done, it's going to leave the new city with a debt of \$50 million starting January 1, 2001. This transitional funding is important because it is needed for restructuring costs, severance packages and consultants, as has been done across the province when communities have restructured.

There are many flaws in this bill. You're going to ram this bill, as it is, through the House without consulting people. You're going to ram it through with all its flaws and its faults, but I urge you, before the end of the week and before the bill is passed, to make an announcement in regard to transitional funding for our communities.

Hamilton-Wentworth needs and deserves the \$50 million. We are not second-class citizens. We should not be treated differently than Toronto and other communities. I urge the government to do the right thing. Introduce the funding and let us get on. If you're going to ram it through, give us a head start and don't put us in the hole.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Down in Niagara, students are ticked off, to put it mildly. Last week students at E.L. Crossley Secondary School had their student council meeting and they decided unanimously that this province can take their millennium books and—they have marked 600 of them "Return to sender." They brought them down to my constituency office this morning.

Students James Sandham, Ars Mazmanian, Amber Ebert and Carmi Sgambelluri, all executive members of that council, using a spare, drove to my office with 600 copies of this millennium book. They first noted the paucity of secondary school content, but at the end of the day the issue was that \$2.5 million worth of government propaganda later, they've still got shortages in teaching staff, they've got shortages in extracurricular programs, they've got shortages in textbooks, they've got shortages in library supplies.

Shame on this government. What an obscenity when students have to stand up for their rights for adequate

funding for education and this government wants to blow \$2.5 million on propaganda, with another \$300,000 set for edition number 2.

The students suggest that it might have been more appropriate for the government to lend support, let's say, to student council yearbooks by way of sponsoring a millennium page. What a good suggestion. Unfortunately, this government isn't about to consider it.

ANDREW MURPHY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's with a tremendous amount of respect and admiration that I stand in the House today to relay the actions of Andrew Murphy, a young man from my riding of Durham.

This past week, the Ontario Community Newspaper Association announced that this 13-year-old grade 8 student from the village of Newcastle in the municipality of Clarington is one of the Ontario Junior Citizens of the Year. The junior citizen award can be given to up to 12 young people between the ages of 6 and 18 each year.

I want to tell the people of Ontario of the remarkable courage and selflessness that Andrew displayed on the night of May 10. That evening, Andrew's father, Rick, suffered an aneurysm. Andrew applied CPR to his father until the ambulance arrived. Unfortunately, his father passed away later that evening.

On the drive home with one of his neighbours, Mrs Cathy Morrison, Andrew noticed smoke coming from another home in the neighbourhood. Insisting that something was wrong and that it wasn't fog, he insisted they stop the car. They witnessed the garage of Gord and Beverly Jeeves on fire. Mrs Morrison awoke her husband Ted, an off-duty firefighter, who got the family safely out while she called 911.

Thanks to Andrew's awareness and persistence, the Jeeves and their two children escaped without injury. Andrew will be presented with a plaque from the lieutenant governor this coming spring.

I'd like to offer my condolences to Andrew, his mother Lyn and the entire Murphy family for their loss.

Andrew's selfless actions that evening remind each of us of the fragile interdependence we have in a sharing community.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Today marks the 27th day that the Ontario Legislature has sat in the calendar year 1999.

I remember members of the government bragging, some two years ago, about the number of days we sat. How times have changed.

We do not have the opportunity to question ministers effectively all the time. We've had estimates curtailed in debate. We've had budget debate curtailed. We are getting more and more omnibus bills, bills that have sections in them that are not related and that are simply designed to prevent meaningful discussion.

In the last 10 years, we have had dramatic rule changes that have curtailed the opposition's ability to effectively participate in the affairs of this province and have conferred greater and greater powers on the executive.

We have had fewer days in committee in the last two years. It keeps going down and down.

Is it any wonder that the opposition gets a bit rowdy? Is it any wonder that the tenor of debate drifts downward year after year? I suggest it's due to a government that doesn't want to face the people and doesn't want to discuss issues, and I think it's time everyone in the government started showing up for question period.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's important to rise today and pay respect to the agriculture community in my riding of Durham.

Over the past weekend I had a number of calls. Indeed, I might say for the record that I called a number of people who are involved in the agriculture sector in Durham riding: Mr Ted Watson, who runs a horticultural field crop operation, Mr David Frew, who runs a very large farm operation and other members in the community were concerned that agriculture is the top issue at the moment in this province.

They were also ready to commend our Premier for his decisive position when dealing with our federal Liberal government and the inequity that's shared by the farmers of Ontario with respect to their 23% of output and yet only 16% share of the safety net programs.

I want to make sure the constituents I have mentioned, and all the farmers in my riding, are being listened to by our Premier. I can certainly assure them that I will be standing on their behalf and dealing with our Minister of Agriculture, the honourable Ernie Hardeman. I can assure them that our minister is listening.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)i, the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on December 13, 14 and 15, 1999, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say aye.

All those opposed will please say nay.

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The motion is carried.

Hon Mr Klees: I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)ii the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 12 am on

Thursday, December 16, 1999, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

DEFERRED VOTES

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
AND LONG-TERM CARE
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999
LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ
ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant certaines lois dont l'application relève du ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne le soutien et la gestion du système de soins de santé.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Skarica, Toni
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Snobelen, John
Barrett, Toby	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Tascaona, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Eves, Ernie L.	Newman, Dan	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Young, David
Gill, Raminder	Palladini, Al	
Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte
Bartolucci, Rick	Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Conway, Sean G.	Martel, Shelley
Bountrogianni, Marie	Curling, Alvin	McGuinty, Dalton
Boyer, Claudette	Di Cocco, Caroline	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie
Bryant, Michael	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Hampton, Howard	Sergio, Mario
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Smitherman, George
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 29.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

1400

ORAL QUESTIONS

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My first question today is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. We learned of some very disturbing revelations during the course of the weekend. We learned that the man running the LCBO has been accepting free trips around the world paid for by liquor suppliers, we learned that he has used his office to give a select few special access to rare wines sold by the LCBO, and we've also learned that he has accepted stock options worth over \$140,000 from a promoter of Italian wines. The man who is doing all of this is Andy Brandt, the former leader of your party, the former leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party.

Mr Brandt is saying there is absolutely nothing wrong with this behaviour. Do you agree with your former leader, Minister, that there is absolutely nothing wrong with this scandalous behaviour?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Upon hearing of these allegations and the investigation—I think we can characterize it as an investigation—by the Toronto Star, I did ask my deputy minister to investigate what the Star was suggesting had occurred. The deputy has reported back to me, after a review of the allegations and the existing policies and procedures that have been in place for some 10 years, that Mr Brandt and the LCBO conducted themselves appropriately.

Mr McGuinty: That is very interesting news to the people of this Legislature and the people of Ontario. We are talking here about the largest buyer and retailer of booze in the world, \$2.3 billion in annual sales, and you are now telling us, Minister, that it is perfectly acceptable for the man in charge of the LCBO to accept free trips to exotic locales worldwide paid for, subsidized by and financed by a select few suppliers of booze. Apparently there is nothing wrong with that, that puts him in no conflict of interest whatsoever, and it does nothing to take the playing field from being level, according to your standards.

Minister, tell us again: How could it possibly be, given this behaviour, that you are telling us that applying your standards, there is nothing at all wrong with this?

Hon Mr Runciman: This is another example of the Liberal Party using the Toronto Star as its basis for questions in this House. The Toronto Star is renowned, as far as this party is concerned, for being long on innuendo and short on fact. This is another case in point.

They mention a specific example about favouritism, and in fact the market share in Ontario of the company that is referred to in the article is virtually identical to their worldwide market share. So to suggest in this House and to reiterate an allegation made in the *Toronto Star* is, I would suggest, lowbrow character assassination of a very fine public servant.

Mr McGuinty: It's perfectly clear now that you have decided you're just going to dig your heels in on this one. That's all you intend to do, notwithstanding that it is perfectly obvious to any objective observer that this is totally unacceptable behaviour. We're talking about the man running the LCBO, a \$2.3-billion operation, and you are telling us that it is perfectly acceptable for him to accept free trips paid for by one of the suppliers to his business. You're telling us that there's nothing wrong with that whatsoever and the message you're sending to all other suppliers right across the province, indeed right across the world, is that it would be perfectly acceptable that they too finance free trips to exotic locales for the head of the LCBO in Ontario.

Minister, will you not do the right thing now? Will you not stand up, understand that this is a firing offence, and turn this matter over to a committee of this assembly so that we can get to the bottom of this scandal?

Hon Mr Runciman: The Leader of the Opposition wants objective assessments.

The Association of Canadian Distillers: "Let me assure you the members of the Association of Canadian Distillers believe that all members enjoy fair and reasonable access to the LCBO."

The Wine Council of Ontario: "Throughout our dealings with the liquor board we found the board to be even-handed and fair and a truly objective observer."

"I want you to be aware that prior to the 1990 provincial election, I offered Mr Brandt a number of senior government appointments, including the position he now holds with such distinction. I did so with complete confidence in Mr Brandt's leadership skills, his professional ability and his integrity. In nearly three decades of public life, Mr Brandt has served the people of Ontario admirably in many capacities, and it is my belief he continues to do so in his present position as Chair and CEO.

"Yours sincerely, David R. Peterson."

If he wants an objective assessment, he must be truly embarrassed by the hatchet job his successor is trying on a fine public servant in this province.

MONTFORT HOSPITAL

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My second question is for the minister responsible for francophone affairs. Minister, Franco-Ontarians were deeply saddened, hurt and angered to learn of your position that when it came to the new city of Ottawa—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Could we have some order when a question is being asked, please?

Mr McGuinty: Minister, Franco-Ontarians were deeply saddened, hurt and angered to learn of your position that as far as the new city of Ottawa is concerned, it is perfectly satisfactory to you that the new capital of Canada be unilingual. You let Franco-Ontarians down. You didn't stand up for their interests.

Now they have another real and pressing concern. It has to do the Montfort Hospital in the new city of Ottawa. They are very concerned that your government is about to appeal a unanimous court decision that said it was wrong for your government to attack the Montfort Hospital, the only full-service French-language teaching hospital in our province.

What they want to know from you today, minister, is: Are you going to stand up for the interests of Franco-Ontarians? Will you stand up today and defend the Montfort Hospital?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I refer the question to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I understand that the Health Services Restructuring Commission has announced that they will be appealing to the Ontario Divisional Court the decision on the Montfort Hospital. That was issued by a press release at 1 o'clock today

Mr McGuinty: This has to be the worst francophone affairs minister that has ever been saddled upon Franco-Ontarians; there is no doubt about that whatsoever. He didn't have the decency to take this question and speak to their very real and pressing concerns. This has entirely to do with the rights of a minority-language group to enjoy the services offered by the only full-service French-language hospital in Ontario. That's what this issue is all about, and Franco-Ontarians are wondering if anybody on that side of the House in the Mike Harris government stands up for their interests.

I ask you again, Minister: Will you stand up and defend the interests of Franco-Ontarians to enjoy the services offered by the crown jewel of francophone services in Ontario, the Montfort Hospital?

Hon Mr Sterling: It's my understanding that the Health Services Restructuring Commission believes this decision is far-reaching in terms of its impact on the interpretation of our constitution, the formation of public policy and the role of the courts in the process. They have indicated that this is the rationale for their appeal, and I think that should be straight.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, nobody's buying this duplicitous claptrap. You are the people behind this appeal. You are the ones who attacked the Montfort Hospital at the outset. You failed to recognize its unique place in the delivery of health care services in Ontario. Now you cannot be said to be shuffling this matter off to the Health Services Restructuring Commission. This is all about the Mike Harris government and the position it takes vis-à-vis the rights of the minority French-language group in

our province. It has nothing to do with the Health Services Restructuring Commission and everything to do with your attitude towards Franco-Ontarians.

1410

I'm going to ask you one more time: Since the minister responsible for standing up for francophone affairs refuses to do so, I'll ask this minister, will you stand up for Montfort Hospital? Will you stand up for the rights of Franco-Ontarians to enjoy the services offered by the only full-service French-language teaching hospital in Ontario?

Hon Mr Sterling: One of the problems that a minister of the crown does have is in terms of talking about a particular case. I'm not talking about this particular case, but I have before, as a general concern, raised the whole matter regarding the increasingly blurred roles of the Legislature and the courts of our country. I have done that on more than one occasion. It has been ongoing for a number of years.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Sterling: I'm talking here again in general principles and not with regard specifically to this case. Decisions are continuing to have more impact on provincial policy-making, and we as legislators are responsible for implementing these decisions.

HOME CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. I want to ask the Minister of Health about her regulation to limit home care in Ontario.

As you know, you passed a regulation last March, without any notice to the public, which now limits home care to two hours per day. You said at the time that this wouldn't affect people's access to health care.

I want to ask you about Leila Stewart, a woman who was receiving five hours of home care that allowed her to manage and to live in her home. But since you brought in your regulation to limit home care, her hours of home care have been progressively cut such that she is now looking at institutional settings to look after her health care.

Do you think it's a good deal for Ontario taxpayers to force chronically ill patients and seniors out of their homes and into institutions by cutting their home care?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The new regulation that does enforce the maximum levels reflects the highest level of service available anywhere in this province. It is those service levels, which were previously not legislated, that will ensure that there is consistency throughout the province. As the leader of the third party knows, we've increased funding for home care in this province by some 43% since 1995.

Mr Hampton: Minister, that may sound good for the bureaucrats, but for people out there who actually need home care, it makes no sense at all. Leila Stewart was

receiving five hours of home care per day. That is what was prescribed by her physician, and the Wellington-Dufferin community care access centre was providing it until after you passed your regulation. Over the past five months they've been cutting it. They now have it down to 2.5 hours a day. She went to hospital last week in an ambulance because she's not receiving the home care she needs. She's headed towards institutionalization.

Is this your idea of a better health care system: Cut back on home care so that people who are living independently at home are forced into hospitals and into homes for the aged and nursing homes, which are more expensive? Is that your version of the health care system? If it isn't, then you should restore those hours of home care. Will you do that, Minister, or are you going to force her into an institution?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The leader of the third party knows that we have the most generous level of home care services in all of Canada. We're presently paying about \$115 per capita. The next highest is Manitoba at \$97.62. So the new maximum service levels are as high as or higher than anywhere else in Canada.

He also knows that it is the local CCAC, which has a board that has local members of the community serving on it, that has the opportunity to make decisions regarding maximum service levels; also, if it is determined, they can go beyond those maximums. It's up to the local CCAC, of which there are 43 in Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Let me give you the gist of this minister's answer. Because Ontario started to build a home care system in the late 1980s and started to improve on it during the early 1990s, this minister now says it's a reason to cut it. She makes a comparison between Ontario and Manitoba, where the Conservatives cut home care, and says that's justification to cut home care in Ontario. Then she says this is all in the hands of the local CCAC.

Minister, you're wrong. Read your own regulation. This is not in their hands. Only in extenuating circumstances and only for 30 days can they offer more than two hours of home care per day. They are being regulated down by your regulation. They're being forced to cut the home care that this person needs and that other patients need. Is this your version of a good health care system, where you progressively cut home care and force patients into hospital, into homes for the aged, into nursing homes or into getting a private nurse? Is that your version of a better home care and health care system for Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think the leader of the third party has forgotten that in 1995, when we became the government, we inherited some very long waiting lists from their government. In fact, we have made no cuts. We have actually increased funding by 43% since 1995. We are presently spending the highest level at any time in the history of this province. We're spending \$1 billion. There were no cuts. However, we did inherit a long waiting list from the NDP, but we fixed that.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I would say to the Minister of Health, first you cut hospitals and force people into home care. Now you're cutting home care.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I think you would agree with me that the allegations that have been brought with respect to Mr Brandt at the Liquor Control Board of Ontario are serious allegations: allegations of kickback, of putting listing policy up for sale, conflict of interest, favouritism in awarding contracts.

Minister, don't you think that allegations that serious should receive the attention of an independent, outside investigation, not someone who is connected to your government and not someone who may be connected to Mr Brandt in his role now or in his past role? Don't you think this is something that should receive the attention of an independent investigator?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): As I indicated in an earlier response, there has been an investigation conducted by an ADM within the ministry; an internal audit committee as well. We have reviewed the policies and procedures that have been in place for some time, including during the time your party was in government. In fact, we have received assurances that Mr Brandt fully complied with the policies and procedures that are now in place. In fact, the allegations contained in the Toronto Star article have been rebuffed, if you will, by the various parties who work with the LCBO. We've had a letter from the distillers and we've had a letter from the Wine Council of Ontario. The allegations certainly didn't stand up to any scrutiny in terms of an internal investigation, and the stakeholders as well have completely rebuffed them.

Mr Hampton: I want to point out what I think is a serious flaw in the minister's argument. We know the Liquor Control Board of Ontario does billions of dollars worth of business. It generates \$800 million in profit revenue for your government. It generates several hundred million more in terms of taxes. It is the largest purchaser of alcohol and spirits in the world.

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When you say this has been dealt with by someone in the civil service, we know that such civil servants as David Lindsay and Rita Burak, the head of the civil service, regularly attend wine-tasting receptions at the invitation of Mr Brandt. We know that civil servants have gone to work for Mr Brandt and then have gone back into the civil service.

My point is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order.

Mr Hampton: I gather the Conservatives don't want this question to be put.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Education, please come to order.

Mr Hampton: When people like Rita Burak, the head of the civil service, and David Lindsay, who is the head of your Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, are regular guests of Mr Brandt and are closely connected to Mr Brandt, when people who work for Mr Brandt are regularly going into the civil service and back, I would say to you that you want to be sure that all the conflicts of interest are dealt with. That calls for an independent investigation. That calls for someone who is not from the civil service, not from your office, not from the Premier's office and not from Rita Burak's office. Do you get my point?

I think it's time for an independent investigation of this to satisfy the public of Ontario that the right thing is being done. Don't you agree, Minister?

Hon Mr Runciman: I think the opposition parties are engaging in a vicious and disgusting attack on an individual who has served this province in a very distinguished way for over 30 years as the mayor of Sarnia, as a member of cabinet, as a representative in this assembly and as the chair of a crown corporation, appointed by the Bob Rae government.

If this party truly cared about conflict of interest instead of scoring cheap political points—just a few weeks ago we brought forward Bill 11, which established the office of Conflict of Interest Commissioner. What did the NDP do with respect to that bill? They voted against it. How sincere are the leader of the third party and the Leader of the Opposition when they express concern in this House about conflict? They—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. A few days ago the government announced that any municipality that is planning to sell electrical utilities for a cash grab, as you call it, must submit a plan showing how this will result in lower electricity bills.

The biggest cash grab in the history of Canada, as you know, was the sale of the 407, which sold for \$3.1 billion. It was \$500 million more than Air Canada and the CNR together. But now we know why. The users of the 407 are being ripped off. If you drive a car from Markham to Mississauga and back, the toll is \$14 a day—that's \$3,640 a year—and you have guaranteed the purchaser that they can double the tolls over the next 15 years, at twice the rate of inflation.

My question to you is, what you've done to the 407 users is outrageous. Will you agree to do exactly what you ordered the municipalities to do? Will you bring forward a plan to lower the tolls on the 407?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): No, we won't bring forward a plan to lower the tolls on the 407. The public understands that Highway 407 is a privately operated, tolled highway. They

don't have to use the highway if they don't want to. There are other avenues for the public to take, such as the 401.

I don't see anything wrong with the privatization of Highway 407. It was the largest highway privatization in the history of the world, and the government is frankly quite proud of that.

Mr Phillips: I want to speak on behalf of the users of the toll road. When you build the road to Oshawa, if a truck takes that road from Oshawa to Burlington, they're going to be paying tolls of \$21,500 a year, doubling to \$45,000. I saw in the weekend paper that people were planning to buy houses in Oshawa. If you're planning to drive from Oshawa to Yonge Street, you're going to be paying \$2,600 a year in tolls to start, and it's going to be going to \$5,200. If you think that is fair to the people who live in that area, that they're going to pay those outrageous tolls and they're going to live with the fact that you guaranteed they can double over 15 years, you and I are in a different world. People out there don't believe they should be asked to double their tolls and pay \$6,000 a year in tolls just to use the 407.

Here's what you said to municipalities: You want them to have the backbone to come forward with a plan that will lower electrical costs. I want you to show, as you said, some backbone and come to the people with a plan that will see them, not double their toll costs, but lower their toll costs.

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member is quite right; we are in a different world. There is no doubt about that.

I don't understand. Nobody is forced to use Highway 407. There are four-lane highways that people can use as opposed to the 407 if they want to come from Oshawa—where the highway isn't yet, I might point out to the honourable member—to the city of Toronto. Nobody compels them or forces them to use Highway 407. They do so of their own free will and volition. They know what it's going to cost them to do it. I don't understand the basis of the honourable member's question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Solicitor General. In my riding of Peterborough I talk to a lot of people on a daily basis, whether it be door to door or on the phone. Throughout the community, my constituents keep telling me that community safety is one of their top concerns. I'm sure the concerns of my constituents are the same concerns of all the people of this province. Minister, can you tell me and the people of Peterborough about the community safety initiatives this government has made?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I'd like to thank the member for Peterborough for his question. Everyone in Ontario deserves the right to be safe within their own communities. We should have the right to ride in our cars, ride on the subways, be safe in our homes, be safe in our communities, expect our children to be able to go to school safe from criminals.

We have looked at a number of programs to try to enhance these types of community safety.

One of the programs is Partners Against Crime. This was launched in June 1997. This grant program focused on community and personal safety. These were aimed at certain areas, such as break-and-enters and crimes against the elderly. Part of this initiative is the community crime prevention grant. In 1997-98, our ministry funded 49 community agencies, for a total of \$1.3 million. In 1998-99, it now includes 60 communities, with an expenditure of \$1.5 million. We believe it's important to keep our people safe in their own communities in Ontario.

Mr Stewart: Thank you for your answer. This initiative by our government sounds, in my mind, like a comprehensive crime prevention program that will enhance community and personal safety.

Interjections.

Mr Stewart: From the comments across the way, it appears they are not interested in personal or community safety. It also sounds to me like what you're talking about is an effective means of addressing local crime prevention needs. Could you give the House some specific examples about communities that have taken advantage of the Partners Against Crime initiative and the community crime prevention grants, please?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: We believe the best solution for this would be to have members of our community and our neighbours working with the police to try to come up with comprehensive community safety programs. I believe the Partners Against Crime initiative and the community crime prevention grant program respond to these concerns. In the case of the member's riding of Peterborough, for example, \$15,000 was given to the student Crime Stoppers "Do the right thing" project. Students used this grant to make a video and inform fellow students of the Crime Stoppers program. It also educated the students on how to recognize and report crimes to the Crime Stoppers program.

In addition to this, the Senior Citizens Council—Peterborough also received a \$28,000 community crime prevention grant and developed Scamblock, which provided programs to combat crime against the elderly. These are just two examples of the community safety initiatives which I believe are very important to our communities.

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HEALTH CARE

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Health. Day after day, you stand in this House and tell us that the chaos in the health care system is caused by some other government.

I have a case for you that occurred on your watch. Judge Bill Pickett of Belleville suffered a heart attack last week, and because of bed shortages, mismanagement and chaos in the health care system, had to wait three days for specialized treatment. He was sent from Belleville to Kingston for an angiogram; there was no bed available.

Ottawa was tried; there was no bed. It was only when Mr Pickett's condition worsened that a bed was found for him in Kingston.

Minister, what do you have to say to Judge Pickett and his family, who, like many people in this province, are being subjected to undue hardships, lengthy waits and, indeed, crises in the health care system that make them fear for their lives?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member can appreciate, this is an issue of long-standing concern. Actually, it was here when your Liberal government was in power. We have certainly identified that we want to ensure that we improve access to health services for all people in the province, so we have been restructuring the health system. We have been investing in the health system in order to ensure that priority services such as cancer, cardiac, hip and knee replacement and dialysis services are all provided closer to home. As he knows, as well, we're modernizing our hospitals and we're investing \$3.2 billion in order to ensure that those services which are long overdue are going to be there when needed.

Mr Parsons: Minister, you need to blame the government that was in place for the last four years.

Let me tell you about another case. Joan Reid, a constituent from Belleville, wanted you to know that her husband, a war vet, suffered the stress of having his heart operation cancelled six times. Try to imagine the stress in that family.

Mr Pickett and Mr Reid had excellent care in Belleville, but required a treatment that wasn't available in that community. Your cuts have forced the closure of beds and do so at a time when backlogs are continuing to increase. Mrs Pickett stated, "I don't think the general public knows how bad it is now and how bad it gets; I sure didn't know."

And yet you continue to deny that there is a problem that has worsened. Minister, how many families have to find out the wrong way that you've made a mess of health care? How many more patients have to pay the price?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Maybe the member isn't aware of the fact that health spending in Hastings-Prince Edward, which of course is the Belleville community, has increased by over \$45 million since 1995. During that time, there was provision for additional money for priority programs such as cancer and heart care; \$266,000 for the Healthy Babies program; \$3.4 million for hospital restructuring; \$233,000 for emergency room funding; \$692,000 for transition funding; increase to base hospital budgets of \$768,000; mental health, \$1.2 million; Ontario drug benefit increases, \$3 million. All of these are initiatives that our government has put in place in order to ensure that we can modernize our system so that patients throughout Ontario have access to the needed services.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Education. We've had some phenomenal growth in Peel county; in fact, probably the largest in this entire country. It has really put a lot of accommodation pressure on the school board.

I don't want to sound like a Liberal quoting the Toronto Star, but there is an article here in the Star on November 23 that says the Peel District School Board wants to build 21 new elementary schools as well as additions to two high schools in the next five years. That capital plan calls for the construction of 10 new elementary schools in Mississauga, nine in Brampton, two in Caledon, and those in fact impact me directly in Heart Lake.

A board spokesperson said in the article that the construction of these schools is part of the board's commitment to do away with portables. How is the minister going to find the funding formula that will assist this school board in achieving its capital plan?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I thank the member for Brampton Centre for his question. He's been pushing very hard for the education needs of his students. Here's an example where, because of the new way we finance education, the Peel board is able to go forward with a very ambitious plan to get rid of the backlog that had started to develop over the last many years because of inadequacies in the way that previous governments had funded education.

It is the board's responsibility to lay out the plans for accommodation, new schools and renovations. They have indeed laid out a very ambitious plan. The Peel District School Board is going to be receiving about \$20 million in grants for new pupil places, which is going to result in some \$200 million worth of construction. The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board also received \$20 million. So we are seeing not only in Peel but also in other high-growth regions like my own, for example, Durham, a very major school construction program starting in this province.

Mr Spina: The chair of the school board stated in her press release that our board continues to grow by about 3,000 students per year. I'm glad that our government is recognizing that growth.

Minister, how is the new way that we fund this education capital system leading to new school construction throughout the rest of the province?

Hon Mrs Ecker: One of the improvements in the way we finance education now is that as the needs for new places for students grow, as that enrolment grows, the money grows as well to support the needs of those students.

As I mentioned earlier, we are at the beginning of one of the most significant, massive school-building campaigns we've seen in this province for many years. We're going to see something like 256 new schools built over the next several years. This year alone, 61 new projects; next year there will be 70 projects. The York Region

District School Board is looking at 17 additions, 24 new schools. The boards are able to plan much better for the needs of their students, and it is indeed a big improvement for us.

It is also going to allow those schools to finally start diminishing the number of portables that students have been forced to go to school in, so it's certainly a win-win for all the students in those regions.

HÔPITAL MONTFORT MONTFORT HOSPITAL

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James) : Ma question est pour le ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones. Vous savez que la Cour divisionnaire a récemment jugé en faveur de l'hôpital Montfort, en décidant que votre commission de restructuration n'avait pas le pouvoir de fermer la plupart des programmes qui ont fermé à l'hôpital Montfort. Vous savez aussi, monsieur le ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, que votre commission de restructuration a aujourd'hui même annoncé qu'ils vont faire appel à cette décision de la cour.

Ma question est simple et peut seulement être répondue par vous, le ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones : allez-vous demander le statut d'intervenant devant la Cour d'appel de l'Ontario, en défense du jugement qui était favorable à la cause de l'hôpital Montfort ?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs) : I refer this question to my colleague the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader) : The health restructuring commission has appealed this particular decision. It is expected that if the health restructuring commission came to an end, which it would naturally do, the Minister of Health would fulfill the role that the health restructuring commission would be undertaking.

M. Bisson : On a un problème dans la communauté francophone de la province de l'Ontario quand on pose une question dans la Chambre au ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones pour oeuvrer de la part de nous, les francophones, et tout ce qu'il peut faire est de nous référer à un ministre qui ne peut pas même parler le français. C'est votre bataille, monsieur le ministre. Vous êtes le ministre responsable des Affaires francophones et on vous demande, notre ministre, de nous protéger et d'aller devant la cour avec nous pour défendre l'hôpital Montfort. Allez-vous le faire ? Oui ou non ?

Hon Mr Sterling : It would not matter which minister was responsible for which matter. If a matter is in front of the courts, then it is incumbent upon a minister to withdraw his opinion or his support or his advocacy against the position that the court might take. The role of the minister, once we are in front of the court, is to be

neutral on that particular issue and let the court make its decision according to what the laws of our country are. If any minister would step out and say that he is in favour or against a particular issue, he would be interfering with our court process, which is against what all of our principles are.

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EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan) : My question is for the Minister of Health. The crisis in emergency rooms continues. Yesterday, 13 of 25 emergency rooms in the Toronto area were sending patients to other hospitals; seven of them were not taking anyone in even if the situation was life-threatening. Your response to this life-or-death crisis is to call another meeting. Obviously the Premier has told you what he told us all last week, that it's not such a bad thing when emergency rooms can't deal with hospital emergencies. It would cost too much to fix the problem anyway, so you are once again going to stall for time and hope the crisis passes.

Kyle Martyn's father says that this isn't good enough. Dean Martyn is furious that your Premier can be so casual about a situation that could lead to another tragic death. The foreman of the jury in the inquest into Kyle Martyn's death is upset because the jury's recommendations have not been acted on. The chief of emergency services at North York General says nothing you've done so far is close to what is needed to turn the situation around.

Minister, a phone call to Kyle Martyn's father to tell him you're going to have a meeting isn't good enough. Can you tell Kyle Martyn's father what action you will take before this year ends?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care) : I think the member appreciates the fact that our government has recognized that there are pressures in the emergency rooms, certainly more than your government did when they were in office.

As you know, we set up the committee. We had the hospitals meet with the Ministry of Health as quickly as possible. We did follow forward with all of the recommendations of the commission. We've invested \$225 million in order to ensure that nurses are trained and long-term-care beds are added to the system on an interim basis, and additional money has flowed to hospitals.

We also have fast-tracked another \$97 million in order to ensure that the emergency room expansions, which should have been done years ago, happen more quickly. As a result of the latest situation, my staff met this morning with the hospitals in Toronto.

Mrs McLeod : There are a couple of very key recommendations from the inquest into Kyle Martyn's death that you have chosen to ignore. One is that there should have been no further bed closures until the hospital bed shortage was addressed. Since that recommendation was made, 645 more acute care beds have

been shut down, in direct opposition to the recommendations of the inquest. The jury said that you should fix the hospital funding formula within six months, and yet today almost half of the hospitals in this province are in a deficit situation, including the Credit Valley Hospital where Kyle Martyn died.

You don't need a meeting to tell you what the problem is. Everyone on the front line is trying to tell you exactly the same thing: There are not enough beds in the hospitals to admit people coming in as emergencies. Hospitals are running at 90% to 95% capacity. There's no flexibility to deal with the unexpected.

Minister, it is past time to act. Will you make a commitment now to fund more acute care hospital beds starting immediately, or will this Christmas be a time of tragedy for even more Ontario families?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member opposite knows that we have done everything that we have been requested to do. She also knows that the new funding formula that is being developed by the JPPC is going to be ready at the end of this year and that it's certainly going to form the basis of the money that flows to the hospitals as we look at the next calendar year. In fact, all of those recommendations, in accordance with what I've learned from the ministry officials, have been initiated, and we will continue to move forward. We're prepared to do even more. We need to ensure that people have access to the system.

This morning, as a result of the meeting with the hospitals in Toronto and with the ambulances and CritiCall, we are going to take further steps to establish three geographic clusters of hospitals in Toronto: one in the east, one in the west and one centrally. We're going to make sure the hospitals work co-operatively in order that access to emergency room services can be maintained—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. I read in the paper last week that a US electricity company named Sithe is planning to come to Ontario to build a power plant in Brampton.

Can you tell us what this plant will mean for the people of Brampton, and in general for the people of Ontario, and what prompted this company to come to Ontario?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I thank the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for the question.

Let me begin by saying that Sithe is planning on investing a billion dollars US in Ontario's electricity sector. They are one of the largest independent power companies in the world, and plan to build two 800-megawatt gas-fired generation plants in Brampton and Mississauga.

Sithe is placing its confidence in Ontario in anticipation of the opening of Ontario's electricity market next

fall. We are less than one year away from giving customers the right to choose who provides their electricity and at what price. Tom Adams of Energy Probe has said that Sithe is a credible player and can drive down prices for consumers.

Over the next three years, Sithe will be creating more than 1,400 construction jobs in Ontario at the two sites. In addition, the plants will provide good-paying, high-tech jobs once they are open. When up and running, the two generating facilities will produce enough electricity to supply 1.5 million homes and businesses, and it's relatively clean electricity because it's gas-fired. We welcome this company's investment and confidence in Ontario.

Mr Gill: That is great news for Brampton and for Ontario.

Some people have argued that electricity restructuring is not good news for our environment and that it could lead to dirty power options. Is this true or not?

Hon Mr Wilson: The Energy Competition Act will allow customers, for the first time, to choose the type of electricity they want to buy. And beginning next November, customers will actually see on the electricity bill that comes to their home or business the emissions created by generation of the electricity coming to their home or business. I expect, after a number of years, that we're going to have a very highly-educated consumer base that is very knowledgeable about emissions, emission targets, emissions trading and all the issues around smog and the environment.

We're doing our part by making sure the customers have that information. Companies like Sithe are doing their part by bringing in cleaner generation and replacing our coal- and oil-fired generation facilities. Ontario Power Generation has some of the best emission controls in place. In fact, our emission controls are better than most of the US states we compete with. We're very proud of that. The environmental community recognizes that to a degree.

There's a lot more to be done, and we're going to continue to do our part with partners like Sithe in bringing down emissions and in educating consumers.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): My question is for the Minister of Education. You have been repeatedly told in this House how Bill 160 has taken money out of education, out of the classroom and has especially hurt Toronto's school kids. You continue to avoid that issue and do nothing.

I have raised the issue of parents who can't get help for their special-needs kids, and you haven't dealt with that either.

Let me read from a letter I received from a worried parent:

"I want you to be aware of the situation at St Jude Elementary School, thanks to Mike Harris's shortchanging of schools. My son, in grade 7, is regularly assigned a

couple of hours of homework each night, because the teacher is struggling to cram in all the learning mandated by the new provincial regulations. He's unable to complete his history assignments, however, because he still (nearly halfway into the school year) does not have a history textbook. He shares one in class, but can't bring one home. I am going to meet with his teacher" and hopefully can purchase one.

This mother goes on to say, "I can't understand how Harris can live with himself by shortchanging our country's future generation."

Let me ask, Minister, how do you live with yourself, shortchanging our children's education in such a manner?

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Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I guess I would ask the honourable member, who supported a party when they were in government, how did they live with themselves, allowing the deterioration of education that they allowed under their administration?

One of the things that we heard loudly and clearly from parents before the election, and which we vowed to fix, was that the way financing for education was going it wasn't working, so we are working to fix that. They said that special education funding was not working; we have brought in a new way to make that work. They said that with the curriculum, students weren't learning what they needed to learn; we are fixing that. Teachers said they hadn't seen new textbooks in the classroom for years; we are also fixing that.

We laid out very clearly the goals and the objectives, the importance of making the education system better in 1995. We continue to do that in 1999, and we look forward to continuing to work with all of our partners, the boards included, to make the system better.

Mr Sergio: Again, I tell you this urgency is being raised consistently in this House, and all you can do in response is talk about the past, about how things were in school boards in past administrations. It is time to look to the future, Minister; yet what you have been doing is reminding us about the past.

It is our kids' future that you are short-changing. Your government has injected nearly \$2.5 million into a Millennium Memento book for students instead of injecting more money into the classroom for pupils, for teachers, for special education teachers, for books, textbooks students can learn from.

When are you going to pay attention to what parents like Lori Marangoni are saying and put up the money where it's needed the most and is going to do the most good for our children's education? When, Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, the opposition likes to keep going back to the millennium book. Not one cent of education money went on that, and they know that, so I wish they'd stop playing politics with that.

Second, the Liberal critic in our estimates finally admitted on the record that, despite all of the accusations from the Liberal Party, we hadn't taken \$1 billion out of education. Finally, he admitted that. We were very pleased to hear that.

Third, we are spending more on special education than has ever been spent before. We also recognize that there need to be changes in how we finance special education funding. We've met with boards; we've met with parents. We are listening to the input they are giving us. Our goal here is to make sure that we have a better curriculum. That is indeed out there, and people are telling me, for example, the curriculum is one of the most impressive changes they've seen in curriculum or in education in 20 to 30 years. We are continuing to move forward on our goal of improving education in this province.

AGRI-FOOD EXPORTS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The minister will know that the agriculture and food industries are important to my constituents in York North. I know that the minister has recently announced his plans to strengthen technical and technology transfer services. The minister has also stated his intention to further strengthen agricultural safety nets. All these measures should put us in a better position to find and maintain markets, especially when we look at the problem agriculture has experienced here in Canada and around the world.

Can the minister share with the House how our agriculture and food exports have fared over this last year?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'd like to thank the member from York North for the question. The member is quite right that the agriculture markets and prices have been in turmoil over the last year. I can report to this House that Ontario's strength lies in its agriculture diversity and in our value-added industrial sector.

As a result, in the first quarters of 1999 Ontario's agri-food exports increased to \$4.8 billion, a 5% increase over the same period last year. By comparison, the increase in 1998 was 10%, or \$6.2 billion, before the current crisis in Europe and the US subsidies impacted the industry.

Also, it is important to underline the significance of our diversity in the agriculture industry. Parts of our farming sector are as bad as or worse than our counterparts in the Prairies, but because of our diversity we have seen a modest increase this year of 4% in overall exports, outpacing the country, which has actually seen a drop of 3.3%.

Mrs Munro: It's good to see that we have been able to see growth in our export markets despite the problems. Can the minister give us an idea of some of the key products driving this increase?

Hon Mr Hardeman: To date, Ontario continues as Canada's leading exporting province in agri-food products. So far this year, Ontario agri-food exports represent over 30% of Canada's total agri-food exports. Value-added products lead the way for Ontario agri-food exports. In addition, it has traditional strength in beverages and baked goods. As well, floriculture and horticulture products enjoyed significant export sales in the

first three quarters of 1999. At last count, 65 out of the top 100 largest food processors in Canada had their head offices in Ontario. That speaks volumes for the quality of products our farmers produce and the growth in Ontario's economy over the last five years.

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I'm glad the government members left enough time for me to ask two questions, because I didn't want to pack it in.

This question is for the Minister of Culture, Citizenship and Recreation. Last Thursday, we commemorated the anniversary of the international declaration of human rights. You will remember you spoke very glowingly about the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

The other members will know that the Ontario Human Rights Commission is the provincial body responsible for protecting and enforcing human rights. Most of these cases deal with people with disabilities and also issues of racism. You will also know that the budget was cut by \$600,000 a couple of years ago by you folks, and recently there were further cuts. Regional offices have been dismantled and many positions eliminated, despite the huge backlog.

Minister, I describe this as a dereliction of your duty to defend human rights in Ontario. How would you describe it?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to say, first of all, that I don't think I spent as much time talking about human rights issues as some of my colleagues across the way the other day.

What's important to recognize is that this government is managing the Human Rights Code. When we were elected in 1995, there was a backlog with human rights and we have done everything to minimize that backlog. In fact, we have taken unresolved cases and we have been systematically, year after year, asking the Human Rights Commission and the board of inquiry to work harder to ensure that those cases are heard more quickly, more effectively, and people have better results from the Human Rights Commission.

Mr Marchese: The member from Niagara Centre, last Thursday, spoke at length and very well on issues of human rights. I suspect some of them would have learned a great deal from it but, quite clearly, not enough. I just want to add a few more things for the record.

Your government removed anti-racism and multiculturalism from the school curriculum, not to mention the word "equity," which has been completely obliterated from any reference in curriculum matters. Secondly, funding for emergency shelters, which are chronically underfunded, were reduced again by 5%, and programming at second-stage shelter was completely eliminated in 1995. Third, child poverty in racial communities is over 40%. I would add, by whatever measure you choose, child poverty has gone down in the rest of Canada while it increased in Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Minister Stockwell indeed. My question is, why have you systematically attacked the rights of so many people in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me first say that Keith Norton is running the Ontario Human Rights Commission for this government, and I think he's making significant improvements and significant changes to better serve the people of Ontario. He has done a number of things which I think better serve the people, including a one-window service of inquiry and intake. He's made considerable efforts to ensure that complaints are being serviced as quickly as possible. In fact, this is the third year in a row when the Human Rights Commission has been able to hear more complaints and have more inquiries than they've actually received from the public.

I'd have to say that I think the Human Rights Commission is doing an incredible job. As we worked at budget planning, we asked the Human Rights Commission what they needed to have to be able to move forward. They have said they need people in the community but they don't need bricks and mortar to be able to do a great job for the people of Ontario, and we've followed through on that.

1500

VISITOR

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to acknowledge in the west gallery the presence of the regional chairman of Hamilton-Wentworth, Terry Cooke.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That is not a point of order, but I'm sure all members welcome him.

PETITIONS

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I have a rather extensive petition. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Conservative government carelessly wasted more than \$2.5 million of taxpayers' money on producing the My Ontario Millennium Memento souvenir; and

"Whereas we feel that \$2.5 million would have been better spent on textbooks, computers and curriculum teaching materials which are sorely lacking in Ontario schools today; and

"Whereas students and parents want materials in their classrooms which are not blatantly partisan in nature as is this souvenir; and

"Whereas students and parents are participating in the Return to Sender program by returning thousands of unwanted copies of the millennium souvenir to Mike Harris; and

“Whereas this action by the Conservative government demonstrates their disregard for the priorities of Ontarians; and

“Whereas 500 hard-working Ontario families had to work one full year to pay their provincial income taxes to cover the cost of printing of this misguided project;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to condemn the skewed priorities of the Mike Harris government and demand that Mike Harris issue an apology to the people of Ontario for wasting taxpayers’ money.”

Of course I affix my signature, as I am in complete agreement with this petition.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have a request for 949 additional copies in Mr Bartolucci’s area. I’m wondering if he would send them over so we could send them back out to the people who would like to hear about them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That is not a point of order.

I have a couple of members standing in between us. If I can get their attention, I’m going to ask them to—I’m sorry, I can’t hear. Someone’s standing between me and someone who wants to talk.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances (carcinogens); and

“Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to these carcinogens; and

“Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances; and

“Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation.”

I continue to support these petitioners by adding my name to theirs.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

“Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

“Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario will:

“Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

“Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

“Fight the federal government’s plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

“Ensure that the Ontario government’s sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible.”

As usual, I’m pleased to affix my name to this petition.

MEDICAL LABORATORIES

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario government has recently imposed a retroactive cap on revenue earned by medical laboratories for services provided under the health insurance plan; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has also required these businesses to refund revenue for services rendered in previous years where the amount of that revenue exceeds the retroactively imposed cap for those years; and

“Whereas this legislation amounts to expropriation of economic rights without adequate compensation or due process of law; and

“Whereas the greatest incentive to the provision of efficient and quality services and products by the private sector is competition and the ability to make a profit; and

“Whereas the removal of these incentives by government negatively affects all of society and particularly patients in need; and

“Whereas this type of legislation also unfairly discriminates against one sector of the society;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That adequate protection of property rights is needed to ensure that government cannot erode the property rights of certain sectors of society without fair compensation and due process of law.”

I will affix my signature to this petition.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

“Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

“Whereas Canada’s number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

“Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

“Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

“We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

“We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario.”

This petition is signed by a number of residents from Merlin and Chatham, and I affix my name to it.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

“Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

“Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

“Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities.”

I have affixed my signature in full accord with this concern.

1510

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I’d like to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

“Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

“Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario will:

“Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

“Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

“Fight the federal government’s plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

“Ensure that the Ontario government’s sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Safety-Kleen is a company that operates a hazardous waste facility near Sarnia; and

“Whereas this company accepts toxic waste from all of Ontario and from many states of the United States; and

“Whereas this company failed to report in a timely manner to the Ministry of the Environment and to the community that a hazardous leak occurred;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To close down the hazardous waste dump near Sarnia and to tighten environmental regulation regarding toxic waste to protect the health of the people and the environment of Sarnia-Lambton."

I affix my signature to this petition.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To Save the Oak Ridges Moraine for Future Generations by passing Bill 12:

"Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine is the rain barrel for the GTA and the headwaters for over 50 streams and rivers that flow into Lake Simcoe and Lake Ontario; and

"Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine is threatened by uncontrolled development that will destroy hundreds of important natural areas and dozens of rare species of plants and animals; and

"Whereas government and expert reports are warning that permanent damage will be done to the supply of water if proposed developments are not managed properly; and

"Whereas the Harris government refuses to do anything to protect the moraine and refuses to listen to its own ministry experts, local residents and environmentalists; and

"Whereas the province must act quickly to ensure that environmentally responsible, sustainable development practices are put in place in this extremely fragile 160-kilometre strip of land that stretches from Caledon to Cobourg;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario pass Bill 12, the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection and Preservation Act, and freeze development on the Oak Ridges moraine until a plan is in place to protect and preserve the moraine for future generations."

I affix my name to this petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a petition to stop the soaring price of gasoline arising from the gas price gouging of the major oil companies. It's to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the price of gasoline has soared over 30% in price in the last six months; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has done nothing to protect consumers and is afraid to take on the big oil companies; and

"Whereas the wholesale market for gasoline is controlled by an oil oligopoly which controls 85% of the wholesale market; and

"Whereas the big oil companies have used predatory pricing to eliminate small competitors; and

"Whereas, in 1975, former Premier Bill Davis froze the price of gasoline for 135 days and called an inquiry into the pricing practices of oil companies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario call for a 90-day freeze on the price of gasoline while an inquiry is held into the pricing practices of large oil companies and that the province pass into law the Gas Price Watchdog Act which would protect consumers and independent oil companies from price gouging and predatory pricing."

I'll affix my name to that petition.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): As you know, last week the member for Windsor-St Clair rose on a point of order and we will be hearing the points of order now.

The member for Windsor-St Clair on his point of order.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Last week, when your colleague the Deputy Speaker was in the chair, I raised a point with respect to omnibus bills and also with respect, in a broader sense, to how the affairs of the Legislature are being conducted now and how difficult it's making it.

The week prior to that, my colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan raised a point of order with respect to the omnibus nature of Bill 23, which we voted on earlier today. I should note that that was another bill that in our view should have been broken out. Although there is a common strand in terms of the ministry, the two items contained in that bill were of a very different nature. Frankly, speaking in terms of the public interest, it's our view, the view of the official opposition, that the bill was indeed another example of something where both parts of the bill deserved the serious and undivided attention of the Legislature.

You'll recall, Mr Speaker, that one section dealt with the government's ability to sue third parties with respect to recovering health care costs. We view that as giving the government the ability to sue tobacco companies on cigarette smoking. That portion of the bill was one which the opposition would have been pleased to support separately had we had the opportunity to debate and vote on it separately.

The second part of the bill was designed to give the Minister of Health the powers of the Health Services Restructuring Commission until, as I recollect, the year 2005. Obviously the government supports that part of the bill and likes it. We in the official opposition do not support that and would have liked and believe we ought to have had the opportunity to debate that separately and apart from something that's very different, although very much attached vis-à-vis the ministry it emanates from.

You ruled on that. You cited concern at that time, but ruled that my colleague's point was out of order. You indicated that "the opportunity for members in this place to give due and sufficient consideration to legislation

should be respected. Evolving practice over the last several years has tended certainly to work against that.” Again, I’m quoting you, sir.

The rights and privileges of all members of this House are undermined by the government’s obvious desire to prevent meaningful debate either in the Legislature or, more importantly from our perspective, sir, among the general public.

Speaking of and referencing Bill 25—that’s the bill that we will begin debating tonight—again it’s a bill that deals with a number of different subjects, albeit tied in to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. They are separate subjects, sir, that we believe ought to have the full attention of the House; for instance, the bill amalgamating the municipalities in Hamilton, in Ottawa, Sudbury, Haldimand-Norfolk. Each of those, in our view, merits at least some individual attention by this House.

The Speaker will also be aware that contained within that bill are further clauses that deal with a range of other issues, including the reduction in the number of members of Toronto city council.

Another important point that has tended to get lost is again notionally the idea that the government has put into this bill that will extend the ability of the government to appoint a commissioner under the Municipal Act for another two years. Even though those amendments come from the same ministry, indeed out of some of the same acts, it is the view of the official opposition that they are of sufficient importance and stature that they ought to have the attention of this House in an undivided fashion.

1520

It’s the view of the official opposition that we again in a number of instances may have supported parts of that bill, but in other instances we simply can’t. It’s the view of the official opposition that indeed it’s increasingly the strategy of the government to do just that: to make it difficult not only for the official opposition but moreover the people of Ontario to distinguish on matters that frankly, from our point of view, merit individual attention and individual concern.

Various speakers over time have referenced these types of bills and whether sufficient debate is allowed with regard to important public issues, whether a bill is split or not. Allow me to refer you to a ruling by the Honourable Lucien Lamoureux, Speaker of the federal House of Commons, as recorded in the Commons Journals for January 26, 1971, page 284. Lamoureux says, “There must be a point where we go beyond what is acceptable from a strictly parliamentary standpoint.” He goes on to say, “... the government has followed the practices that has been accepted in the past, rightly or wrongly, but that we may have reached the point where we are going too far and that omnibus bills” of this type “seek to take in too much” too quickly.

James Jerome, on May 11, 1977, further indicated “some very deep concern”—not unlike the concerns you, sir, expressed some two weeks ago, “about whether our practices in respect of bills do in fact provide a remedy for the very legitimate complaint of the honourable

member that a bill of this kind gives the government, under our practices, the right to demand one decision on a number of quite different, although related, subjects.”

While you, sir, last week expressed concern about the government’s practices, you proposed no solution nor in fact did you direct the House leaders of the three recognized parties to come up with a solution. In order to protect the rights and privileges of all members of the House, the official opposition respectfully requests more guidance from you. We require a more definitive ruling either with respect to your own ruling or by directing that the House leaders of the three parties attempt to find a solution to this problem.

The government consistently uses its parliamentary majority to thwart any opportunity by the official opposition to meaningfully negotiate the way legislation is dispensed with in this House. This, coupled with changes to the standing orders over the past eight years that have been done by this government and by previous governments, has undermined meaningful debate on questions of broad public importance.

I think Mr Speaker Jerome’s comments are most salient. Again today, at the 11th hour—this is the 34th day this House has sat this year; two separate legislatures have sat—we have bills that in our view, the view of the official opposition, only have a tenuous relationship, that merit a full public discussion and debate if we are to pay to them the kind of attention they deserve.

It’s our hope, sir, that you will rule or direct the House leaders to find a way to deal with these kinds of circumstances. We find ourselves again today, with Bill 25, in the position where we will not be able to have public hearings on a bill that in our view is five very separate, very different, very important items that there ought to be time in the Legislature to debate in their entirety.

While the government will tell you that they have to get this passed in order to accommodate municipal elections next year, the fact is that this government, by its own precedent in the city of Toronto, didn’t pass its Toronto bill until April of the same year those elections were held. The practice in municipalities in terms of municipal nominations is that most people, even though they can begin getting nominated by January 1—the process doesn’t start in earnest until August or September.

So we look to you, sir, for direction, whether it be you breaking out certain bills or defining more clearly what is appropriate or not, but moreover, directing that the House leaders meet formally under your direction to find a solution to this problem.

It is, in our view, a direct threat to our ability as members not only to debate and come to understand bills, but more important, to allow the public the opportunity to participate in debates either through bills, through committee or otherwise. Our failure to do so, our failure to recognize the very wise comments of yourself some two weeks ago, and your predecessors in the federal House, we think continues to undermine this Legislature’s ability to deal with issues.

We heard last week concern about the tenor of debate in this place, and it should be no wonder. As I've indicated, over the last eight years—indeed, over the last 10 years—the ability of oppositions and the ability of government members to debate legislation has been slowly whittled away to the point where, in utter frustration, debate does tend to degenerate to a stage I don't think any of us are happy with.

We recognize that this House is our House and that this House is one where we must agree to the rules. I ask you, sir, to understand that when a government has a majority, the government can, generally speaking, do what it wants. We're asking you to direct the House leaders to find a solution to this vexing problem so that we are not put in the position of having to vote once on items that frankly are very separate and very distinct even though they may have common threads, and allow us to have a more meaningful public debate into very important issues.

The Speaker: I thank the member for his point of order. The member for Hamilton West.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I appreciate the opportunity to add my comments and go on the record with regard to this issue. At the outset I need to be very clear that I am not speaking as the House leader of the third party but rather the member for Hamilton West.

As this relates very much to my community, among others, I think it's important that I start by saying, Speaker, in addition to this being a point of order, I see it very much as a point of privilege to the extent that my rights as a member of this place are being denied me by virtue of the process—not the right to a legitimate mandate but the process that the majority government is using to implement Bill 25.

First of all, the size of this bill alone should cause everyone to stop and think for a moment, particularly when we look at the possibility that this bill could be law within days—some 167 pages in one bill. It's a huge bill. Without getting into the dynamics of the various component pieces, a bill this size alone deserves the proper scrutiny of committee and full House participation in terms of discussion, and there is every likelihood to believe that's not going to happen. I realize that we don't know that yet, but I think if anybody wants a pretty safe bet, putting money on the fact that there is going to be time allocation on Bill 25 is about as safe as they get.

You will know, Speaker, that this bill deals with—in fact, as the subheadings state—a number of different acts, different communities. The explanatory note alone, which you will know is normally one, two or three paragraphs at the most for a relatively complex bill, in the case of Bill 25, runs three pages. It's as long as most of the bills that we deal with, just the explanatory note alone.

The bill then goes on, as I mentioned earlier, to talk about the City of Greater Sudbury Act. It's a part of this, a separate bill. The Town of Haldimand Act should be a separate bill. The City of Hamilton Act should be a separate bill.

Lastly, the components that make up amendments, as they're called in schedule F, amendments to various statutes, go on and mention all kinds of different acts: the City of Toronto Act, the Electricity Act, the Municipal Act, the French Language Services Act. It goes on and on.

1530

I want to make reference, as has my colleague from the official opposition, to a well-known and respected Speaker in Canada, and that would be Speaker Carr and your comment, sir, of Thursday, December 2, just within the last two weeks. I remind you, with respect, that at that time we were dealing with another omnibus issue, and the opposition was asking that you split the bill to allow us our right as members to comment and vote on different laws that we might have different opinions on, rather than bundling them into an omnibus bill, as we have here in the case of Bill 25.

At that time, Speaker, you said the following in response to my submissions: "I would, however, like to say that in determining this as Speaker, I have found that omnibus bills cause me great concern. I take what the member for Hamilton West has said very seriously. The opportunities for members in this place to give due and sufficient consideration to legislation should be respected, and evolving practice over the last few years has tended to work against that. In my ruling, I said very clearly that I find this bill to be in order."

On another point, Speaker, you say: "But again I say, and I take with great respect what the member for Hamilton West has said, that the opportunity for members in this place to give due and sufficient consideration to legislation should be respected. Evolving practice over the last several years has tended certainly to work against that."

Speaker, with the greatest of respect, I say to you that we would obviously agree with those words. But until such point as there is a change in practice in this place, respectfully, sir, they remain words, albeit comforting words but words nonetheless. At some point, we need you to step in and defend our right as minority members in the opposition to maintain our full rights as MPPs.

In my case in particular, for all my public life I have supported a one-tier government for my community. While I have some difficulties with the way this particular Hamilton act has been put together, I feel that I have a right to deal with that act as it affects my community. I represent one-third of the constituents. I believe I should have my right to express my concerns about that bill, made available to me, and my right to vote "yea" or "nay" on that bill.

As it happens, how I feel about that part of Bill 25 is different from how I feel about some of the other parts, because they do different things. Yet I, and anyone else in my situation, finds themselves basically in a situation of parliamentary blackmail, to the point that one vote for this bill, once it's on the record, can technically be used by anyone to state as part of my public record in representing Hamiltonians that I voted yes or no on every single component in here. I don't think that's right.

When I look at your comments of December 2, it seems to me that you are saying the same thing, that in cases like this where we have differing opinions on different parts of the same bill, at some point you cross a threshold where individual MPPs have lost the ability, through the process involved, to carry out their responsibilities and to have accorded to them the privileges and rights that a member of the provincial Parliament has.

So, Speaker, with great respect, I ask you to give effect and action to your earlier ruling to what seems to be your general leaning—and I don't want to put words in your mouth—by making a ruling in this case that breaks this cycle and returning at least some small amount of democracy to this place. By that I mean ensuring that individual MPPs in the opposition, in a House controlled by a majority government, have every opportunity to avail themselves of the rights and privileges that ought to be accorded and are meant to be accorded to individuals when they are given the honour by their community of sitting in this place and representing them.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Is it a different point of order or the same point of order?

M. Bisson : C'est un point d'ordre complètement séparé de ce point qui a été soulevé, monsieur le Président.

Vous savez qu'il est arrivé une couple de fois dans les deux dernières semaines que des membres de l'opposition dans notre parti ont posé des questions directement à un ministre, et vous, dans votre décision comme Président de la Chambre, avez dit que si on pose une question à quelqu'un et ce n'est pas nécessairement le meilleur ministre à qui diriger la question, le ministre avait le droit de référer la question. Vous savez que c'est arrivé directement la semaine passée et même la semaine avant. Aujourd'hui dans la Chambre j'ai posé ma question à M. Baird, le ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, question qui était dirigée directement aux ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones—

The Speaker: Would the member take his seat. This is a completely different point of order. He may not have come in during—this is a point of order on—

Interjection.

The Speaker: No, it's on a different matter, but I thank the member anyway. Sorry. The chief government whip.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I appreciate the opportunity as well to speak to this point of order. Bill 25 may be an omnibus bill, but as my colleagues have previously spoken and admitted in this House, omnibus bills are not strangers to this place. In fact, there are many precedents in this very House of omnibus bills being considered, being debated, being passed.

I would say at the outset, Speaker, that I believe the issue before you is to deal with the appropriateness of this bill in the context of information that you should be considering as you deliberate on this. I believe that we'll

all agree that there are parliamentary rules and forms that guide this House, there are standing orders that guide this House, and there are precedents; and before we move to precedents in other parliaments, I believe you will agree as well that the precedents that have been set in this House must be considered before any precedents set in any other parliamentary forum. So I believe, as I will put the argument to you, that we have the precedents in this House for the form of legislation before you.

I refer you to Beauséne, section 626: "Although there is no specific set of rules or guidelines governing the content of a bill, there should be a theme of relevancy amongst the contents of a bill. They must be relevant to and subject to the umbrella which is raised by the terminology of the long title of the bill." Where a bill adheres to this requirement, no Speaker in our parliamentary tradition has ruled such a bill out of order. The measures contained within Bill 25 clearly fit within the umbrella of its long title: "An Act to provide for the restructuring of four regional municipalities and to amend the Municipal Act and various other Acts in connection with municipal restructuring and with municipal electricity services."

This bill moves forward with restructuring initiatives in various municipalities, four specifically as referenced in the long title. It addresses a number of outstanding issues of municipal reform with the goal of helping our municipalities to rationalize their administrative structures, to deal with the mechanics of restructuring and to improve delivery of services. This municipal restructuring theme, this theme of relevancy—which, by the way my colleague from Windsor-St Clair referred to, and he admitted in his own argument to you that there is a theme of relevancy in Bill 25—is clearly reflected in the long title of the bill, as referred to in Beauséne.

Omnibus bills are not new to this House, as I indicated before, and they have been regularly found to be procedurally acceptable where they have conformed to this theme of relevancy in their long title, as laid out in Beauséne. Rulings by Speakers of the Ontario Legislature—and this is the place I believe you need to look for the issue of precedence—as well as the federal House, by the way, to which my honourable colleague referred, have supported consistently the practice of using one bill to demand one decision by members of this House on a number of quite different issues, although related.

You yourself, Speaker, upheld this test of the form of a bill in your ruling of December 2, 1999, and that was with respect to Bill 23. Clearly, you indicated some concern in terms of allowing the appropriate time for debate, and we will have that in this House. My colleagues refer to the need to have their time to express their opposition to or support of different parts of the bill, and they will have that in this House. On that occasion you noted, and I would like to quote your ruling, "... there have been numerous omnibus bills that have been found in order by previous Speakers, who considered them to be acceptably consistent with parliamentary practice."

The scope of the legislation before us, Bill 25, is more limited, and I say considerably more limited, than that of previous omnibus bills introduced by this government and the former NDP government. The NDP's Bill 175, as I'm sure my colleague will recall, Bills 26, 152 and 25 of the past Parliament, were all omnibus bills of considerably greater scope than the bill before us today and they were deemed procedurally acceptable in this House.

Points of order raised when the NDP's Bill 175 was called for second reading expressed doubt whether the contents of that bill demonstrated a theme of relevancy. It was noted that the matters covered by that bill ranged from allowing individuals to pay driver's licences, permits and plates by credit card to banning the use of leg traps in the wild fur industry. Speaker Warner found Bill 175 to be in order and it was eventually passed into law.

Speaker, the bill before us today is considerably more limited in scope and diversity than was Bill 175, and that dealt with 139 statutes in 14 different ministries. The bill in question today deals with a single ministry, and its components all derive from the same municipal restructuring project, the same theme of relevancy.

The precedents are clear: Bills are in order as long as there is the theme of relevancy among the contents of the bill, and I submit to you on behalf of our government that in this case the umbrella of the long title demonstrates the coherence among the bill's contents. The contents of Bill 25, we believe, fall within the umbrella of its long title and we trust that you, as Speaker, will agree that this bill is in order. I thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

The Speaker: I thank the chief government whip. I will recess for 15 minutes and come back with my ruling.

The House recessed from 1545 to 1600.

The Speaker: I want to thank the chief government whip, the House leader of the official opposition and the member for Hamilton West for their submissions on Bill 25, An Act to provide for the restructuring of four regional municipalities and to amend the Municipal Act.

Like you, I have carefully reviewed the bill and our precedents and practices as they relate to omnibus legislation. Omnibus bills have been the subject of procedural scrutiny in this country for almost three decades. In that time, members and Speakers alike have expressed grave concern over the use of this kind of legislation and I am mindful that there may come a time when we go too far. However, while members may have expressed what undoubtedly are legitimate grievances with regard to Bill 25, they do not make the bill procedurally unacceptable. As Speaker Lamoureux said in the House of Commons of Canada in 1971, the issue for the Speaker is whether there has been advanced a "legitimate procedural argument."

Therein lies my responsibility. I must ensure that the contents of the omnibus bill have a theme of relevancy subject to the umbrella which is raised by the long title of the bill. We in this House have had experience with a number of omnibus bills, many of which have caused a great deal of controversy. Several of those bills, I would

say, had a lesser thread of relevancy than the one we have here before us today.

How does one determine relevancy? According to Beauchesne, relevancy is determined as follows:

"... there should be a theme of relevancy among the contents of a bill. They must be relevant to and subject to the umbrella which is raised by the terminology of the long title of the bill."

On June 10, 1997, Speaker Stockwell noted that a bill cannot be saved by its title and that "a theme of relevancy is achieved when all parts of the bill are linked in a tangible way."

I concur with Speaker Stockwell's more restrictive definition of relevancy, and it is that which I applied to my consideration of Bill 25. This bill creates five new statutes and amends several others. It is long and, I agree with some members, there may be aspects of it which may cause serious concern. However, while it covers several different geographical areas of the province, it maintains throughout the consistent theme of municipal restructuring. My reading of the bill found no unrelated subjects.

I do not find that the parts of the bill are so different as to have no connection with each other and therefore cannot find the bill out of order.

I want to address the comments made by the House leader for the official opposition relating to his request for direction from the Speaker that the House leaders meet to deal with this issue. I must say it requires no direction from the Speaker for the House leaders to come together and to make any arrangements among them on how the business of the House is to be conducted. This has happened numerous times in the past, and either as a result of unanimous consent of the House or the stated agreement of the House leaders, Speakers have allowed matters to be conducted in accordance with those agreements. On the issue specifically of omnibus bill legislation, Speaker Sauvé perhaps said it best when in 1982 she stated, "It may be that the House should accept rules or guidelines as to the form and content of omnibus bills, but in that case the House, and not the Speaker, must make those rules."

As I say, that option always lies open to the House leaders. Obviously, I would be more than happy to offer any facilities and resources of my office for any meetings that you may initiate in this regard.

I want to thank all of the members for their participation in the point of order.

Point of order, the member for Timmins-St James.

RENVOI DE QUESTIONS

REFERRAL OF QUESTION

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James) : Timmins-James Bay, monsieur le Président. St James, c'est de l'autre bord de la province. C'est correct.

J'ai un point et je ne veux pas prendre trop de temps, mais je veux le faire. C'est assez important pour nous dans l'opposition.

À une couple d'occasions, notre parti, le caucus néo-démocrate, a posé des questions à un ministre spécifique sur une certaine matière. Vous, quand on a posé ces questions, avez dit qu'on n'avait pas le droit de poser la question à un ministre, tel comme la semaine passée, quand on a posé au ministre du Travail une question sur l'amalgamation de la ville de Toronto, et vous-même avez référé cette question à un autre ministre de la Couronne.

Aujourd'hui dans la Chambre, j'ai posé une question directement au ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, lui demandant quelle pourrait être sa position envers la décision du sujet dont on avait parlé sur l'hôpital Montfort. Le ministre a référé la question, et c'est le point d'ordre que je vous demande.

C'est mon opinion que j'ai posé à ce ministre une question faisant affaire directement avec lui et qu'il n'avait pas le droit de référer la question. Je vous demande des directives là-dessus.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): To the point of order: As you know, you need to ask a question of the minister in his or her relevancy. The minister can still refer the questions, under our standing orders, to any other ministry, and that is what has happened today. So it is not a point of order, but I thank the member for his point.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEWER MUNICIPAL POLITICIANS ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 RÉDUISANT LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILLERS MUNICIPAUX

Mr Clement moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act to provide for the restructuring of four regional municipalities and to amend the Municipal Act and various other Acts in connection with municipal restructuring and with municipal electricity services / Projet de loi 25, Loi prévoyant la restructuration de quatre municipalités régionales et modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités et diverses autres lois en ce qui a trait aux restructurations municipales et aux services municipaux d'électricité.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): At this time I seek to divide my time with the member for Carleton-Gloucester and the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. I'll deem silence to be acceptance.

I just had the opportunity to move second reading of Bill 25, which in its short title is the Fewer Municipal Politicians Act, an act that if passed by this Legislature will lead to more efficient and more accountable government in municipalities across Ontario.

Since we introduced this act last week, there has been a great deal of debate and a great deal of interest in this legislation, without a doubt. We on this side of the House welcome this because it is through this debate, through the continuing discussion at first and second and third readings of this bill, through encouraging further public input, that we can offer Ontarians the best way of achieving lower taxes and fewer politicians. That is our particular goal: lower taxes and fewer politicians.

When our government was first elected in 1995, we took the initiative and reduced our own numbers first. We cut the number of MPPs in this province from 130 down to 103 and we are proud to say that this move has saved taxpayers an estimated \$6 million per year.

Many municipalities have followed suit. There are now 586 municipalities in Ontario, down from 815, and 1,059 fewer politicians in this province. This reform has meant savings of more than \$220 million a year, and taxpayers have seen the benefits of more efficient services: less overlap, less duplication and red tape and more accountability.

Our government believes that more taxpayers deserve these benefits. That's one of the reasons we took action in August of this year and announced that we would help to put an end to the seemingly endless debate over local government reform in four regions of Ontario: Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Sudbury. It had become frustrating for all involved. Taxpayers were telling their municipal councillors, "Stop talking and do something," and we agreed with them.

We put the brakes to the indecision and we appointed a special adviser for each region. They held numerous meetings, received more than 1,600 written submissions and reviewed existing proposals and research. They sought the best ways to achieve lower taxes, to achieve fewer politicians and simpler, more efficient and more accountable local government. Last month they gave me their recommendations, and I was pleased in turn to release them publicly and to present them to our caucus and to cabinet.

Our government promised at the outset that we would review the recommendations as a priority and that we would act quickly. We promised the residents of these areas that solutions would be in place for the November 2000 municipal elections, and that our legislation, if passed by this Legislature, would ensure that this happens.

I would like to take a few minutes and discuss each of the four regions in turn and their proposed new governance structure.

First, Haldimand-Norfolk: This region has been the subject of several governance studies. The most recent was in 1994, and that recommended that the number of councillors be reduced by about 50% and that some responsibilities be transferred from the region to the local municipalities. It was opposed by certain interests and no reform took place.

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The structure we are proposing in our legislation takes this study into account, and a great deal more. We are

proposing that the regional municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk and the six local municipalities of Delhi, Dunnville, Haldimand, Nanticoke, Norfolk and Simcoe be replaced by two new municipalities: the town of Haldimand and the town of Norfolk. The new boundaries would closely follow the boundaries that divided Norfolk and Haldimand counties.

With respect to council sizes, the new town of Haldimand would have a seven-member council, including a directly elected mayor. The new town of Norfolk would have a nine-member council, including a directly elected mayor. The two municipalities would share the police services board and ownership of the Tom Howe landfill site. Together, they would have 47 fewer municipal politicians than they do now, while taxpayers could save upwards of \$2.5 million per year.

Second, I want to turn our attention to the regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth. This region has been reviewing its structure of municipal government since early 1995. Each and every effort, including a constituent assembly, including mediation, including proposed private legislation, has ended unsuccessfully. Our legislation, if passed by this Legislature, would end the uncertainty.

We propose that Hamilton-Wentworth and its six local municipalities—Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Glanbrook, Hamilton and Stoney Creek—would be replaced by a single city, and a process would be put into place that would allow for further community discussions regarding the future of Flamborough.

The new city would have a 14-member council, including a directly elected mayor, and it would mean 45 fewer municipal politicians than there are now. Taxpayers could save \$35 million per year when you add in the savings from merging the administrations of the city of Hamilton and the regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth.

I would like now to move to the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton in my remarks.

Interjection: We wish you would move.

Hon Mr Clement: That's why I said "in my remarks."

This region too has a long history of municipal reform efforts. Various options have been presented over the years, and each has been unacceptable, unfortunately, to one group or another. Most recently, a citizens' panel was appointed in the fall of 1997 but was unfortunately disbanded the following spring, citing interference from municipalities.

We propose that this region and its 11 local municipalities—Cumberland, Goulbourn, Gloucester, Kanata, Nepean, Osgoode, Ottawa, Rideau, Rockcliffe Park, Vanier and West Carleton—be replaced by one city, and we'll put a process in place to allow for community discussions on the future of Torbolton and Fitzroy in the northwestern part of West Carleton.

The new city would have a 21-member council, including a directly elected mayor, and taxpayers could

save up to \$75 million per year. There would be 63 fewer municipal politicians than there are in place currently.

Fourth, I'd like to turn to the regional municipality of Sudbury. In the last several years, all restructuring efforts in the Sudbury region have ended without success. The only approved change was made in 1997, when the council agreed to the direct election of the regional chair.

It is now proposed that this region and its seven local municipalities—Capreol, Nickel Centre, Onaping Falls, Rayside-Balfour, Sudbury, Valley East and Walden—be replaced by one city. This new city would also take on nine surrounding geographic townships to the north and southeast, an area with a total population of about 1,200 people. There would be a 13-member council, with one mayor and two councillors for each of six wards. It would mean 35 fewer municipal politicians than there are now, and it's expected that the annual savings there could reach \$8.5 million per year.

All of these changes mean that the number of municipalities in these four areas would be reduced from 34 to five. The total number of politicians would be cut from 254 down to 64. That's 190 fewer municipal politicians, and taxpayers could save almost \$121 million per year.

We would be creating five new municipalities with larger, more solid cores that would better attract investment and create jobs for their communities. That would be a benefit not only for those individual communities but for all the people in Ontario.

Should this legislation pass, our goal is that each of the five municipalities would be established on January 1, 2001. In the meantime, we would put transition boards in place to ensure that the transition would be smooth. It's important to ensure that services not be interrupted and that savings to taxpayers be found as soon as humanly possible.

Serving on a transition board would be an important role and we would choose the members carefully. Choices would be based on their knowledge of municipal issues, their management skills and experience, and the unique contribution the individuals could make to setting up the new municipality.

I would like to emphasize that these boards wouldn't be involved in the day-to-day decisions that affect the residents of these areas. Indeed, decisions would continue to be made by the elected municipal officials. Rather, the role of the transition boards is more forward-looking than that.

The boards would ensure that municipal expenditures and assets are safeguarded during the period of change. They would approve the year 2000 budgets, and their responsibilities would include recommending how services should best be delivered, determining the organizational structure and hiring key staff.

With respect to existing staff, this legislation provides that if a person is an employee of a municipality on the day on which it is dissolved, they would automatically become an employee of the new municipality. That's good news for all the employees.

There has been a great deal of positive reaction from the municipalities with respect to these changes, but one area that has caused some concern is the tax structure. We recognize that there are obvious differences between urban and rural areas: in land use, in use of sewers or water or transit, and in population as well. So our government feels that it's only fair that each new municipality be allowed to set different tax rates for different areas. We feel that it's only fair that for a limited period of time the municipalities be allowed to set different tax rates that take into account the different financial circumstances, including the debts and the reserves of the old municipalities. Again, we're talking about fairness.

There is one other urban-versus-rural matter that I would like to briefly address and that is what is called community identity. While the boundary lines of these municipalities may change, they are only lines on a map. As so many communities across this province have already discovered, you don't need to have your own local government and your own local bureaucracy to maintain your own identity. Communities are defined by their history, by their spirit, by their community events, by the people who live in them. Boundaries do not reflect or affect that truism. While 35 municipalities would be reduced to five, while services would be better, politicians would be fewer and taxes would be lower, I think we can all be sure that communities within each municipality would retain their own special and unique identity throughout any municipal boundary change.

Should this legislation pass the Legislature, the next year will be an exciting one for each of these four regions. They will be moving forward in a direction that they have each long contemplated but not been able to act upon. But there is still more hard work to be done. Governance reform takes a lot of commitment and a lot of co-operation and diligence on the part of both elected officials and public servants. But many of Ontario's municipalities have already gone through it. Many municipalities and their taxpayers have already experienced the benefits. I look forward to the day when the taxpayers of Haldimand-Norfolk, Ottawa-Carleton, Hamilton-Wentworth and Sudbury can say they have realized these benefits too, just as the city of Toronto has.

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As you know, Metro Toronto and its six member municipalities successfully amalgamated just two short years ago. The new city has achieved a great many savings and has become more efficient and accountable to its taxpayers. Yet we believe still more has to be done in the city of Toronto. We believe taxpayers deserve even further gains. That's why this legislation, should it pass, will reduce the number of Toronto city councillors to 44.

You will recall that the government's original plan was that, beginning in 1998, Toronto would be governed by 44 councillors and a mayor, with new ward boundaries based on the 22 new federal ridings. As a transitional measure, the province established a 28-ward model with 56 councillors and a mayor. Another councillor was added through a by-election, bringing the total to 58 in-

cluding the mayor. Toronto council was given the power to reduce its councillors to a more manageable level, but it hasn't moved on that despite the obvious benefit to the taxpayers.

We believe that Toronto taxpayers deserve the benefit of a smaller, more accountable council, and we believe that a more efficient, lower-cost council should be in place for the November 2000 elections. That's why we are moving forward with fewer politicians in Toronto. The council itself has indicated that they would prefer reducing to 44 councillors rather than to 22, and we have reflected this preference in our legislation. We look forward to hearing Toronto's recommendations on how best to divide the 22 ridings into 44 wards.

I would like to say as well that while reform is going on across this province, while there has been such success in terms of municipalities streamlining their operations, achieving lower taxes and fewer politicians and being more accountable and efficient, we know that more has to be done for the sake of the people in this province. That's why this legislation, should it pass, will allow us to extend and improve current provisions that allow local government reform in counties, separated municipalities and northern municipalities as well. It's why we keep urging regions outside the greater Toronto area—Muskoka, Niagara, Oxford and Waterloo—to continue to look at reform, and it's why we have also asked the four regions inside the GTA—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Member for Hamilton East, come to order.

Hon Mr Clement:—Durham, Halton, Peel and York, to continue to look for efficiencies. In this case, it makes sense for any reform to wait until after the Greater Toronto Services Board completes its review at the end of next year. Again—and really we can't say this enough—we want to give all the people of this province the benefit of lower taxes, fewer politicians, better services and more efficient and accountable government. That's what it's all about.

There are parts of this legislation that I would also like to speak briefly to if I could. We are asking that the Municipal Elections Act be amended with regard to municipal referendums. Currently the act allows municipalities to put a question on the ballot. The provisions in this bill would allow for terms and conditions to be set out by regulation.

We would also amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, so that French must be used in ballots and on other election materials related to the election of French-language school boards.

Also with this legislation we are honouring a request by Halton regional council to permit direct election of Halton's regional chair beginning with the November 2000 municipal elections. This will mean more accountable government in Halton region and will bring us one step closer to our goal of more accountable government across this province.

As you know, our government has always had very specific goals in terms of governance in the great province of Ontario. When we released the Common Sense Revolution five years ago, we stated that we wanted lower taxes, fewer politicians, and more efficient, effective and accountable government. We are still committed to less overlap, less waste and less duplication. We knew that we wanted clear lines of responsibility, less bureaucracy and better services for citizens. Our efforts, combined with the hard work and commitment of the municipal leaders and citizenry of this province, have taken us a long way down the road to better government for Ontarians.

There is still more work to be done. If passed, the Fewer Municipal Politicians Act will help us take those next steps, and I call upon the support of all members of this House to ensure that this happens on behalf of the taxpayers and on behalf of the hard-working Ontarians who are so important to the future of Ontario.

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): It is a pleasure for me to speak in favour of Bill 25. When this government was elected in 1995, it was quite clear that change had to occur in Ontario if we were going to meet the challenge of the future. It was, indeed, time for action. The economy was in the dumpster, we had high unemployment and a runaway deficit, and we were doing things the same way we had done them for the last 50 years. There was no innovation in the way we were doing some of our processes, whether it be planning, approvals in the construction industry or anything else that went on in our municipalities.

One of the requests of municipalities over the years had been, "Give us more authority so we can make decisions in our community, close to the residents and where we understand and identify with the residents of our community." For years and years, that plea was totally ignored by the province. In fact, it went the other way: A lot of authority at the municipal level was usurped by the province, and you had to send off and get approval for this, that and the other thing—time delays, bureaucracy and never-ending growth in red tape. It was this government that did listen and said, "Yes, we will make some change."

That, of course, resulted in the Who Does What panel and a lengthy discussion and debate with partners at the provincial level and the lower tier, on where the services are best delivered, where they can be held accountable and responsible to the people who are paying for the services.

That resulted in a shift of some services down to the lower tier. It resulted in restructurings that occurred across the province. The bill we are speaking to today follows along the lines of continual restructuring and reorganizing of the province, so that our residents, our taxpayers and our businesses will be better prepared to meet the challenges as we head into the next century.

Change is very closely associated with this government, whether it be in health care, education or in the restructuring. All those initiatives were taken so that we

can deal with the challenges facing us, where we have to do things smarter, more efficiently and more effectively, and be more accountable.

Ottawa-Carleton is the one I'm most familiar with, having been a mayor in one of the 12 governments there, and part of that debate and never-ending discussion for 18 years. I'd like to point out that since 1976, 29 studies or expensive consultations in one form or another resulted in no action.

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Look at the four regions where there has been ongoing discussion, debate and study: frustrating. It is frustrating for the people who live there, frustrating for the businesses trying to get things done, frustrating for the politicians, and they had created a lot of friction. It is an emotional debate when you're talking about your communities and how things should be organized to handle things in the future. It was time for action, no local decisions. There was ample opportunity for local decisions in all four regions, and the locally elected politicians could not come up with a local solution. So it was the commitment of this government that we would appoint special advisers to go in, consult in one final consultation, take into account all of the information-gathering that had gone on over the last 20 to 25 years in some of the areas, and then come forward with a recommendation on how best to reorganize these regions so taxpayers could take advantage of more efficient government and less costly bureaucracy.

There is ample evidence, in fact in abundance, that savings are achievable. As the minister had pointed out, since 1995 we have reduced the number of municipalities from 850 to 586; we have reduced the number of politicians by 1,059 in Ontario; and savings for taxpayers to date are in the order of \$220 million. That's no small change.

Once again it is decision time, so that even more Ontario taxpayers can enjoy savings, enjoy better accountability, enjoy better representation and more streamlined, efficient government. That certainly is what this bill is all about.

Just look at some of the goals and guidelines that the provincial government had set in place at the outset of restructuring:

Reducing government—fewer politicians, fewer municipalities—and not only that but reducing the entanglement between the different levels of municipalities so that it was in a more understandable format for the average taxpayer;

Enhancing accountability in the delivery and provision of services by having a more effective, more representative system of governance where politicians could be held accountable, where the bureaucrats could be held accountable;

Eliminating duplication and overlap, which indeed translates into best value for taxpayers: a review of services and the ability to provide those services as efficiently and effectively as possible;

Strengthening the ability to make local decisions, one of the underlying reasons why the entire process started. This was something that was being demanded by local municipalities, the ability to make the decisions in their communities that affected their residents, and the ability to make local decisions that would encourage investment and economic growth and job creation.

This act permits these four regions to address the provincial goals in a positive and thoughtful manner so that taxpayers will realize the savings and accountability they deserve and expect in a new governance model.

Just a couple of short years ago I had, as mayor in Ottawa-Carleton, promoted a three-city model and was involved with the other 10 mayors. But I had also promoted a model of governance that would end the debate and serve the residents of Ottawa-Carleton well, a governance model that would satisfy the goals laid down by the provincial government. Residents in my opinion deserve nothing less.

I want to compliment the special advisers—Mr Shortliffe in Ottawa, Mr O'Brien in Hamilton-Wentworth, Mr Farrow in Haldimand-Norfolk and Mr Thomas in Sudbury—for taking on the unenviable task of pulling together up to 25 years of debate and setting up a thorough consultation process on a very emotional issue. I compliment them for staying focused on the job at hand and drawing on the information received, and of course their wealth of experience, to formulate a model of governance that will serve our taxpayers well into the next century. I compliment you on doing a very difficult job very well.

Overall the new structures reduce the number of governments from 34 to five, a reduction in politicians from 254 to 64, a reduction of 190 politicians, for expected annual savings of about \$121 million.

In Ottawa-Carleton, once again, all 12 governments, the 11 municipalities and the region, despite the fact that they couldn't come to an agreement on a governance model, had agreed that a one-tier governance model was indeed the way to go. Unfortunately, the local solution always seemed to be just beyond their grasp.

This new model of governance in all four regions will enable local government to streamline bylaws, the approval process, delivery of service, so it is more effective, more responsive and more accountable for the taxpayers. Indeed, it does provide the councillors in each of those areas with more authority.

The new city of Ottawa will continue to be a designated area under the French Language Services Act, ensuring that the city receives services from the province in both languages. As in the past, municipalities have the authority to provide municipal services in French. I will continue to work to ensure that the status quo remains. It has been the practice in Ontario that duly elected municipal councillors are free to determine the expansion of these services.

On that particular issue, as a former mayor in Cumberland and as a member of that council, the service we provided to the francophone community was something

that had grown and developed over the years. I'm proud to tell you that the city of Cumberland, the city of Gloucester, the city of Vanier, the city of Ottawa and the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton did indeed have policies in place to be able to provide the services in both languages. That was a locally developed policy and it evolved over the years as to the level of service that was delivered to the residents. That ability is still there for the new city council to be able to make that decision on how, if and when they wish to expand those services, and to what degree.

All of us in this place and certainly in the province of Ontario are aware of the significant and monumental change around the world of an expanded global economy, of a world where the movement of information and data happens in a fraction of a second. Keeping that in mind, it is of utmost importance that we as the government of Ontario and as legislators continue to work to make sure that our municipalities, our residents, our communities and our businesses are well equipped to meet those challenges in the future, so that the market is not just something that's in the neighbourhood but that it is a global market that we can work towards and expand upon.

Our residents, our businesses and our institutions are depending on us to ensure that we have given them the tools to be well positioned to meet those challenges as we head into the next century.

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Our residents and our businesses expect value for their tax dollars. In the new model of governance there is an ability to establish benchmarks, best value and best business practices, so that we have some yardsticks with which our residents, our taxpayers and our business can measure newly established councils to see if in fact there is an improvement, that there is a constant improvement in the level of service, that there is an accountability there that can be measured by our taxpayers.

Transition boards will be put in place in each of the five areas. When this legislation is passed, each of the five new municipalities will be established on January 1, 2001. Transition boards will be put in place as soon as this legislation is passed early in the New Year so that the transition can run smoothly and there is no disruption in the level of service at the transition date between the old councils and the new city councils. The boards are important to ensure that services are not interrupted and that savings to taxpayers can be found as soon as possible.

There will be one transition board for both the towns of Haldimand and Norfolk, and single transition boards in each of Sudbury, Ottawa and Hamilton.

Serving on this board is indeed a very important role and, as the minister had indicated, those members will be chosen very carefully so that we have the expertise necessary to help make that transition process an outstanding success.

Some of the functions the board would be involved with would be approving the year 2000 budgets; amalgamating municipal electrical utilities and converting

them to business corporations, as municipalities must do by November 7, 2000; making decisions on municipal election administration matters, including the appointment of a returning officer, determining the organizational structure and hiring some of the key staff; making recommendations on the year 2001 budget, council committees and how services should best be delivered.

Transition boards have played an important role in the smooth transition of many of the amalgamations across this province, and they would be vital in helping these four regions set up their new municipalities in the best way possible.

One other item of concern when you go through transitions such as this is the employees, the people of each municipality who work for them. All of those individuals who have a job with a municipality on the day it is dissolved will automatically have a job with the new municipality. Bill 25 would give the transition boards the status of employer in the transition period. Existing collective agreements will be extended until new collective agreements are negotiated. Our goal is certainly stability in the workplace during the transition year.

Another area of great significance is that of taxation and area rating. Our government feels that in the implementation of this new governance structure it's only fair that each new municipality would be allowed to set different tax rates for different areas. For example, the cost of public transit in the new city of Ottawa could be paid for through the fare box and through special area rates in areas serviced by transit.

There is much more to do. As the minister indicated, there are numerous amalgamations and the potential for amalgamations across Ontario. The ones that have already been put in place are enjoying the benefits of those amalgamations, for they do save money, provide a more streamlined and effective model of governance and are more accountable to their taxpayers.

I believe that any of us in this place who have worked at the municipal level understand the importance of being able to have some control over your destiny at the municipal level. In the restructuring of these four regions, this act does just that. It provides more authority for the locally elected officials so that they can respond to the needs of their local residents and businesses.

Quite often, a couple of the major complaints as you went around the community were, "We're overgoverned," "There's too much red tape." You could hardly determine between one process and another, and once you crossed a boundary or a municipal line, there was another set of rules. Then you had to go and hire a consultant and a lawyer and an accountant and this battery of officials to try and keep things sorted out if you were trying to build homes or do any other business across municipal boundaries.

This is indeed a big step forward for these four regions, and it is now time to put our shoulders to the wheel and make sure that these restructured communities provide a much more efficient and accountable service

on behalf of their taxpayers. They deserve no less. As the minister stated, we will do everything we can to ensure that this clears the path for local officials to be able to make the decisions that affect their communities and that they can meet the challenges in the new millennium.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Bill 25, the Fewer Municipal Politicians Act, is a popular piece of legislation among my constituents. This bill gives them what they've wanted since the birth of regional government in 1974. It gives them their two original municipalities back.

This bill provides people with light at the end of the municipal restructuring tunnel, something that many believed would never happen. Citizens in Ottawa-Carleton, Hamilton-Wentworth, Sudbury and Haldimand-Norfolk have endured countless studies, petitions, discussions, referenda and municipal motions concerning restructuring and so far have not received much in the way of action. Now that has changed. Our government has initiated a process for restructuring in these areas, areas of the province where most people agreed that something needed to be done but nothing had been done.

Some 27 years ago I chaired focus groups for the Earl Berger study on regionalism in Haldimand-Norfolk. At that time, regional government was nothing more than a gleam in a bureaucrat's eye. Then, as now, people did not want regional government in our area. To this day, people in Norfolk and Haldimand want the return of their two former counties, and I agree with their views.

I think it is important to point out that the members opposite have been all over the map with respect to municipal restructuring. In Haldimand-Norfolk, Liberals have been rowing in two directions, at first opposing and then supporting regional government when it seemed advantageous to do so. The former Liberal MPP for Norfolk, Gord Miller, opposed regional government in the early days and in this Legislature. Recently, our government announced restructuring in Haldimand-Norfolk. Former Liberal MPP Miller, in a letter to a daily newspaper in my riding, declared that regional government should now not be restructured. Former MPP Miller's flip-flop position was also supported by his son Doug, the Liberal candidate in the recent June election.

Municipal restructuring was an important issue in my riding during that election. I have advocated scrapping regional government since being elected in 1995, in order to lower taxes, enhance accountability and reduce bureaucracy. However, my opponents in the 1999 election favoured a status quo approach. I was clear about my intention to fight for restructuring if re-elected and I believe that this year's election sent a clear message from the province's citizens, and certainly the citizens of Haldimand-Norfolk, to continue to streamline government.

The Liberals in this House have made their position clear, as many of them were here as members of the 36th Parliament and voted as a group against my private member's bill to restructure Haldimand-Norfolk. Very

simply, although returning to a two-county approach was what local people wanted, Liberals were against it.

I would like to go over some of the history of local government in our area and the creation of the region, an event many consider to have been an experiment gone wrong.

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In 1790 the county of Norfolk was enacted as part of the London district of Upper Canada. After 1820 the county of Norfolk became the Talbot district, and Simcoe was made the district town. The Baldwin Act of 1849, which abolished districts, caused the county to be called Norfolk once again. Up to 1850 the townships of Walpole and Rainham, both in Haldimand, formed part of the Talbot district. The balance of Haldimand belonged in the Niagara district. In 1850 the county of Haldimand was set aside for municipal and judicial purposes, and Cayuga was established the following year as the county town.

The former counties of Norfolk and Haldimand have always been good neighbours. Both survived and thrived over the years by cooperating against common adversaries and the hardship of earning a living from the land. The boundary between them was invisible and understood: on one side the clay of Haldimand; on the other, the sand of Norfolk.

In 1974 they were partners in a shotgun wedding enacting a union that was not self-sufficient from the start. The marriage was propped up through subsidies from the province in the form of free policing, the "interim solution" farm tax rebate where the region double-dipped into the farm tax rebate program, and generous water and sewer subsidies.

This regional municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk was created in 1974 under the assumption that the new Nanticoke Industrial Park would rapidly expand and bring hundreds of thousands of people to the area. Before the shotgun nuptials in 1974, residents of the two counties were consulted; 80% opposed the creation of a regional government.

The 1974 promises of economic and urban growth did not come true. The 1972 Richardson study on local government predicted that the population of Haldimand-Norfolk would grow to more than 320,000 by the end of this century, a mere two weeks hence. However, during the last 25 years, population growth has averaged only about 1% a year. The Haldimand-Norfolk region is 2,876 square kilometres, and just under 100,000 people live in the region. The regional municipality is now the second-largest employer in the region, ahead of the Nanticoke generating station and the Imperial Oil refinery, and only behind the Lake Erie Steel Co. In Haldimand-Norfolk, a system of government was built to service a rapidly expanding urban and industrial area, but in 1999 we still have a sparsely populated area of farmers and farm-related infrastructure.

As I mentioned, there have been 20 years of studies, petitions, municipal referenda and municipal motions calling for an alternative to the forced marriage of Nor-

folk and Haldimand counties, a marriage of convenience to share the tax revenue from the industrial baby that was dropped on Nanticoke's doorstep.

The creation of the region of Haldimand-Norfolk grew out of an experiment in regionalism designed to govern future growth areas. With the creation of the region came the laying of the foundation of another experiment known as the new town of Townsend. In theory, it was to become a focus of regional growth, a city the size of Kitchener-Waterloo. Townsend was designed and launched by a provincially funded agency. Today, however, Townsend remains a static community of no more than a modest subdivision of homes.

The Earl Berger study of 1972 recognized local opposition to the region, concluding: "There is strong opposition to regional government in all group samples in Haldimand and Norfolk.... There is strong support for increasing the powers of local government."

As I mentioned, I chaired focus groups for this study and received the input of local people at first hand. They didn't want regional government and believed it would increase their taxes.

Since the first days of the Haldimand-Norfolk region there have been problems. In April 1974, after only 12 days in existence, the new council gave themselves a pay raise behind closed doors. One newspaper of the day said that their decision was "indeed an unfortunate start to a new era—starting out with 'secret' meetings: hiding behind closed doors in fear of what might be a politically unpopular decision."

Six years into regionalism, during the 1980 municipal election, the township of Norfolk held a referendum asking its residents if they supported renegotiating the Haldimand-Norfolk regional act and returning all responsibilities to the area level of government. The vote was yes, 3,298; no, 469. The result: No action was taken.

Nine years later, again in the township of Norfolk, a motion was passed by council to allow the township of Norfolk to operate as an independent municipality within Ontario. The result: No action was taken.

Also in 1989, the town of Haldimand passed a motion to investigate the possibility of seceding from the region. No action was taken.

The 1989 Pennell report advised local people that if regional government lost its free policing and other subsidies, a new model of government should be investigated. Again no action was taken by the council of the day.

In 1994, the Norfolk Taxpayers Coalition submitted 9,600 signatures, including some regional and local politicians wishing to "secede from the region of Haldimand-Norfolk." The government of the day commissioned the 1994 Barnes report, which indicated that the number of councillors should be reduced and duplication of services eliminated. Again no action was taken.

As part of the 1994 municipal election, both the town of Simcoe and the city of Nanticoke held referenda; 60% and 75% respectively voted for an alternative to regional government. Again no action was taken on this decision.

The 1995 regional chair's report advocated moving to a single-tier government.

Last year the Haldimand-Norfolk region levied a 17.9% tax increase on residents, the largest tax increase of any region in Ontario. In response, well over 10,000 people signed their name to a Residents Against Tax Hikes petition calling for a tax freeze and the elimination of regional government. However, there was to action taken to either cut costs or restructure.

Also in 1998, the Simcoe Reformer Angus Reid poll found that 75% of Haldimand-Norfolk residents have a strong attachment to their local council. The corresponding figure for regional council was 20%. The same poll found that 64% do not believe that local government is fine and should be left alone.

In the fall of 1998 I introduced legislation titled An Act to eliminate regional government, end duplication and save taxpayers money. This bill passed second reading with unanimous support of my caucus colleagues. As I mentioned earlier, the Liberals voted against this legislation.

When restructuring was announced this August for the four Ontario regions, I set out to consolidate the advice I had received concerning local government. That advice has been very consistent: Scrap the region and bring back Norfolk and Haldimand.

I submitted a brief to Haldimand-Norfolk's special adviser Milt Farrow, entitled Creating Two Independent Counties in Norfolk and Haldimand, in which I made some recommendations. For example, I recommended to Mr Farrow that the six existing municipalities be merged to form two large, independent county structures.

These one-tier municipal governments would be responsible for providing all municipal services across each area. Mr Farrow's report and this government's legislation reflect this recommendation and the wishes of local people. A strong majority, about 60% of the submissions received during this consultation process, favoured a two-county approach.

Recreating Norfolk and Haldimand is what people want, and that is what this legislation in Bill 25 intends to do. Each newly created municipality will be large enough to capitalize on economies of scale which exist for the delivery of services but are accessible enough to give residents a similar feel to small-town government.

1700

Under my proposal, the important industrial and commercial tax base derived from the Nanticoke industrial park would have been divided to the benefit of both counties. This would have effectively split the lucrative Nanticoke industrial tax assessment between the two counties on the basis of revenue by population. Mr Farrow chose to recommend that the line dividing the two municipalities be drawn so that the entire Nanticoke industrial park be located in the new town of Haldimand, with a plan to pay for joint services on the basis of weighted assessment.

I suggested that municipally provided health and social services could be coordinated through a joint

special services board of elected councillors, or each county could simply outsource the service. Joint public-private agreements with neighbouring municipalities could be set up. There are areas of overlap and duplication in the services provided by the region, by area municipalities and by the province. Not surprisingly, the current two-tiered arrangement leads to both perceived and actual duplication in some responsibilities.

Responsibility and accountability should go hand in hand. A convoluted system of shared service jurisdiction conspires to make real accountability impractical. The key to successful municipal governance is to clearly outline responsibilities for services, allow those responsibilities for these services to govern their planning, their funding and their delivery, and hold them accountable for the results.

Some in Haldimand-Norfolk indicated their desire for a stand-alone management board to coordinate the services that may be shared between the proposed municipalities. I strongly recommended to Mr Farrow that no management board be established, as the creation of such an entity would, both in appearance and later in practice, serve as a second level of government—the exact structural problem that led to the inefficiency of regionalism in the first place.

The transition to the two new counties will be intensive and must be free of undue influence. The transition year, next year, will be very important to decisions that shape the two municipalities. Above all, the transition must be fair and equitable and protect taxpayers.

My recommendations were based on the advice of local residents and on 27 years of experience in studying regional government. The birth of the region 25 years ago brought union without unity. Two self-contained county or district communities within the region have remained. To the untrained eye, the two counties have much in common and could appear to be homogeneous in geography and culture. However, the two counties still retain much of their former identity and loyalty. Sand remains sand; clay remains clay.

The legislation before the House today as it relates to Haldimand-Norfolk follows the wishes of residents. It will implement what is desired: a one-tier system of government, but in two separate and distinct municipalities. Local people feel that this is the best possible solution. This legislation gives citizens of Norfolk and Haldimand the restructuring news they've awaited for over 25 years. They will get Norfolk and Haldimand back.

If passed, the legislation will create two one-tier municipalities, Norfolk and Haldimand, on January 1, 2001. Norfolk's council is to be made up of eight councillors elected in seven wards and a mayor elected at large. Haldimand would also elect a mayor at large and have six ward councillors. Restructuring will reduce the number of municipal politicians from 63 to 16, not including school board trustees.

Special Adviser Farrow estimates that restructuring will save local property taxpayers a minimum of \$2.5 million a year. It's important to note that this savings

estimate does not include savings from new ways of doing business. Privatization and contracting out are just two measures which taxpayer groups have advocated. With sound management and good transition decisions, many believe that Norfolk and Haldimand can improve considerably on these savings projections.

In the 60 days that Special Adviser Farrow consulted with local people, the strong majority favoured the two-municipality approach. Mr Farrow listened and put forward a common sense recommendation for separating the two former counties. The legislation introduced by Minister Clement reflects Mr Farrow's report and, by extension, the wishes of local people. They told Mr Farrow what they wanted over the course of the two months, and government is now embarking to implement these reforms.

I am proud to speak in support of this legislation on behalf of my constituents. They've been waiting for it for a quarter of a century.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions and comments?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I found it very interesting listening to the member for Carleton-Gloucester earlier, when he was promoting this deal. I understand that he has been promoting the three-city model for the Ottawa area throughout, and now all of a sudden he has changed.

I would rather not get involved in the kind of name-calling, for example, that the last member got involved in where he said that so-and-so was in favour of this 10 years ago and now has changed his mind. First of all, I don't think there is anything wrong with people changing their minds. If nobody ever changed their mind, if everybody always came in with a set opinion about everything, then what are we doing here?

The one issue that in all of this restructuring has been totally lost sight of is that the government somehow thinks that by getting rid of a whole group of local politicians, many of whom serve for \$5,000 or \$10,000 per year, somehow we're doing something for representative government, that somehow we are enhancing representative government and that we're giving greater accountability to these smaller councils.

I've spoken about this on many occasions in this House. I think the fact that on the smaller councils in the rural municipalities a person is able to talk to their councillor down the concession line, or two lot lines over or what have you, about a local problem, and to somebody who can actually do something about a problem, is something that has really enhanced local government in this province for the last 150 years. All this mega-legislation, whether you favour part of the restructuring or not—I favour some restructuring—is just out to do one thing, and that is to get rid of as many politicians as possible so that, in the government's words, there can be "greater accountability." Well, if they want to take it to the extreme, why don't they just get rid of all government and impose dictatorships? Then you'd have greater accountability as far as they are concerned. It is not right to do it this way.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): A couple of thoughts, having listened to the government members do their leadoff—first just a brief comment to my colleague across the way from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. Like the member for Kingston and the Islands, I would suggest that staying away from personalities and personal attacks is not only something he ought to avoid just from a professional standpoint, but people who live in glass houses—if you want to play that game, there are headlines such as "Norfolk Mayor Blasts Area MPP," and that looks like a reasonable picture of you, with your name underneath. So I don't know that you really want to go walking down that road. But far be it for me to tell you what to do.

Let me also say to the minister that his comments—this whole business of accountability, and he's going to improve democracy—are so galling, absolutely galling in the face of a mammoth bill like this that in every likelihood is going to be rammed through this House in a matter of a few days: 167 pages affecting hundreds of thousands of people, and not one minute of committee hearings—never mind public hearings—to do the work that we do at committee, which is to go through these bills and make sure they're as good as they can be and to try to avoid major mistakes, like your Planning Act, where you had to bring in six subsequent bills to fix it, or when you rammed through the WCB changes and did a lot of damage to volunteer firefighters. It was only because we gave unanimous consent that you got that fixed. We're going to see more problems here. Don't talk to us about accountability. You're the ones who don't understand democracy.

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Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): We're seeing yet another attack on democracy in this province. I think this government's vision of democracy is similar to four wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for supper. There's democracy in action, but someone's going to lose.

It is the exact opposite of accountability that we're seeing. The accountability that exists now is when you have a locally elected person whom you may not know personally, but they're a neighbour. You know where they are, you're going to bump into them in the grocery store, you're going to see them in the driveway, and you can stop in and chat with them.

The fallacy that larger is more economical—I defy you to give me examples of where larger organizations are more efficient. Personal experience tells me that in many cases where I've been able to identify inefficiencies, it's because one of my neighbours or one of the taxpayers in the area came to me and said, "Do you know that this is going on?" and gave me the opportunity to rectify it. The taxpayer needs to talk to people who have the ability to make the change, and they will lose that, because with the larger government the decisions that have to be made will still be made, but they will be made by bureaucrats. I don't mean that as a derogatory term, but they will be made by bureaucrats.

When they are made by politicians, the taxpayers have the option every three years to say, "No, I don't agree with those decisions." That's lost when there's less democracy. That means an unaccountable individual will be making the decisions, and perhaps not making wrong decisions intentionally, but will not have the day-to-day contact. All of us know from electioneering that going door to door is a wonderful mechanism to find out what your community wants and what your community needs. I haven't seen a lot of bureaucrats knocking on doors around here trying to find out what's wanted. This is a retrograde step that is just one more layer of democracy being peeled off what is a wonderful province we have.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): As the critic for the NDP on municipal affairs, I thought it was interesting to listen to the comments made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who stands in this House and says, my Lord, that he wants to pass this bill because it's going to increase accountability and—the word he used—democracy within local governments and within Ontario.

If you read this bill, it doesn't go anywhere near increasing the democratic process for local communities. Quite aside from the issue that, basically, freedom of information act requests are out the door by way of abolition through this bill when it comes to requests within the municipalities, are the powers that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is going to have, once this bill is passed, to do virtually anything he wants when it comes to changing any law necessary to allow this restructuring to take place. We know, as the member from Hamilton mentioned earlier, that when the government passed bills in this House last session, they so bungled municipal affairs bills such as the Planning Act that they had to come in with six other pieces of legislation afterwards to fix the bungling mess they created in the first place.

The government has a unique way of doing that. They say, "Well, we don't need the Legislature any more." No, don't be bothered with democratic debate and democratic process about how you change laws in this province. It's only worked in the British parliamentary system for the last 300 or 400 years. This government is going to, by way of this law, give the Minister of Municipal Affairs the power to change other laws without ever having to come to the Legislature. We're not talking about changing regulations; we're talking about changing laws. Those are far-sweeping powers the minister is taking and it certainly has absolutely nothing to do with increasing democratic control on the part of municipalities.

The government is wrong in this bill. It's flawed, and they should wake up and smell the coffee and withdraw this bill in its present form and any other form after.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Coburn: I'd just like to point out to all members of the House that the debate, discussion and consultation on this have gone on for over two decades in many of the areas. The special advisers were appointed, and everybody who wanted to had ample opportunity to comment.

For example, in Hamilton, the mayor of each municipality, all MPPs, the regional chair, three days of public meetings, 247 submissions. In Ottawa-Carleton, two full days of public sessions in Ottawa, two half-day sessions for rural residents; all 11 mayors, including the regional chair, spoke to the adviser; all municipal councils, all regional councils, some CAOs, 12 financial officers and treasurers, 1,026 written submissions, 89 phone calls. In Sudbury, four days of public meetings, 76 submissions; Haldimand-Norfolk: met with every councillor at least once, 330 people attended meetings in the six municipalities; major industries, including industrial-commercial, agricultural, ratepayer groups, met with the chiefs of the Six Nations Indian reserve, the Mississaugas of the New Credit Indian reserve—340 submissions. We've consulted and consulted. The public has said in each of these areas: "Enough already, it's got to end. Let's get a model of governance so that we can move forward and manage the corporations in a way that will address the challenges facing us in the new millennium."

For those in the House who had been municipal politicians, one of the biggest complaints you've heard as municipal politicians was not being able to make decisions in your own community that affected your own people. This bill does that. You've got more authority, more responsibility to make those decisions, and that is one of the major attractions of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I want to express my disappointment with the Speaker's ruling that he wouldn't allow the splitting of this bill.

This bill affects the lives of over 3.5 million Ontarians. You've got everything in here, some of the biggest cities in this province—Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Sudbury. You're also changing the structure of regional government in Halton, you're changing the wording on referendums, that kind of legislation.

This legislation essentially covers the lives of many ordinary Ontarians and they're never going to have a chance to speak to it. As you know, this minister is refusing to have committee hearings or even public hearings because they are afraid to take this out to the public. We've challenged them to have them in public. I think we should have a hearing in Dundas; we should have a hearing in Cumberland. I want to take this legislation—and let's hear from the people in Dundas and Cumberland what they think about this piece of legislation.

This is the minister who talks about accountability. If that isn't an oxymoron as it relates to Bill 25. This bill has the most heinous clause probably ever put in a piece of legislation. I call it the end-justifies-the-means clause, where a minister of this government, behind closed doors, in secret, could amend or change any law of this province without any member of the Legislature, any member of the public having a say in that. That is abhorrent, it is undemocratic, it is dictatorial and it is not right. Even though you may agree—some people may agree with the changing of structures of local govern-

ment, and that's your prerogative. I don't challenge you on your disagreement. But I am asking the people of Ontario to say, "When this bill is passed, you are going to give a minister of the crown the right to change any piece of legislation behind closed doors," and there it is; in section after section they repeat it: "providing for consequential amendments to any act that, in the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, are necessary for the effective implementation of this act."

They can change any law by regulation. They don't have to come here and they don't have to go to the city councils. The minister, when confronted with this, said, "Well, I know it's quite a bit of power to get, but I'm only going to have it for a temporary period of time, then I'll give it back to you." You think, "Trust me with the dictatorial powers." We've heard that before. If this is about accountability, why would they have this anti-democratic, end-justifies-the-means clause throughout this bill, time and time again? Because, like the property tax assessment bills, they know there are going to be a lot of mistakes in this bill, and they want to cover up the mistakes through regulatory changes behind closed doors. They're going to rush this thing through with no public hearings or committee meetings, so you can bet your bottom dollar there will be many mistakes in Bill 25.

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This doesn't just affect politicians and bureaucrats; it affects real people living in all these communities. They're going to be affected by fire services, garbage pickup, health services and the quality of their roads, so it's important to get this right. Why not have, as I said, one day of hearings in each of the communities, just to make sure we get this thing right? As you know, with the property tax assessment bill they've had to bring in eight bills, and another one is coming, because they fouled up the property tax system so badly in this province.

Bill 25 is about municipal restructuring, eliminating politicians and wiping small towns and cities off the map. We know that. Basically, this government believes that small government is obsolete and that small government is disposable. We know that.

The impact on communities across Ontario, from Cumberland to Nepean, from Ancaster to Dundas to Delhi, will be permanent. This is not a temporary measure. These changes will be in effect for the next 25 to 50 years, if not longer. The communities affected by Bill 25, the omnibus, megacity bill, all have unique local identities, history and traditions. No doubt some of these local traditions and uniqueness will live on but many time-honoured, homemade ways of doing things will disappear forever.

I know the minister says these cities and towns are just lines on a map. But I think they're more than lines on a map. If you talk to my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings, he'll tell you that towns like Picton are more than lines on a map. Belleville is more than lines on a map. These are real people with real hearts and souls,

whose families have been raised in these towns and cities. They are not just lines on a map.

No doubt, local identity, history and political culture mean little to the authors and supporters of this kind of legislation. Yet we know that if you don't take time to know and respect local history and the blood, sweat and tears that went into building these small but successful communities that have weathered everything from the ice storms and the Depression, you cannot expect our children and youth of the future to respect the traditions locally.

We all hear the mantra from the Harris government about the need to downsize for efficiency and prosperity. What we don't hear is anything about ordinary citizens and their right to be heard and to have access to their local elected officials.

Local government and decision-making is messy—we know that—and downright frustrating. Yet if you compare our representative system of local democracy with those in other countries or jurisdictions, you will see that our system, despite its faults and warts, is as good or better than most. I challenge you: Where is there a better system of local democracy in Canada than in Ontario as we had it until this government came along?

This piece of legislation is about establishing a dramatic change in the government of our province. It clearly paves the way for a new model of local government which is neither local nor democratic, which emphatically underlines this government's belief that bigger municipal government is better and small, local town or city governments have no place into the next millenium.

Many people now believe that this big, one-size-fits-all approach is the solution to all our problems. There's a competition: "My city is bigger than yours."

We've got a megacity here in Toronto, and we have megacity problems. Our debt is going through the roof. It's going to almost double in the next two to three years.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): And whose fault is that, Mike?

Mr Colle: It's your fault, because your government downloaded \$250 million onto the property taxpayers of Toronto. You did that. Your government downloaded. That's the problem. In opposition, the Tories didn't support the elimination of small, local government. In opposition, the Tories used to sing a different tune.

I want to quote a member of the Legislature who spoke on a beautiful small town called Fergus, Ontario, in 1994. This is what this member said: "There is no cost to a municipality to maintain its name and identity. Why destroy our roots and pride. I disagree with restructuring because it believe that bigger is not better."

"Services always cost more in larger communities," he said. "The issue is to find out how to distribute services fairly and equally without duplicating services."

The person who said that bigger is not always better was Michael Harris when he was in opposition in 1994.

I'll also quote from another minister of this government in 1993, when he was in opposition. This is the Honourable Jim Wilson. He said:

"I've spent the last several months reviewing all the regional governments in Ontario, many of which were imposed by my party in the past, so believe me, I come to this with some experience, and the south Simcoe experience to date.

"There are no cost savings. Bigger is not better. The government cannot point to an area in this province, including south Simcoe, where amalgamating departments has resulted in savings to the ratepayer. It does not exist. In fact, history shows that smaller units are more efficient. I, to this day, cannot find anyone in Tottenham, Beeton, Alliston or Tecumseth township who liked restructuring."

This is what the Conservatives used to say in opposition, "Bigger is not better." Now we've got a government that says all across this province, "Bigger is better."

What is most disturbing about this bill is that they have thrown in six municipalities basically to be downsized democratically and to be amalgamated. What they're going to do the next time, I'm sure, because they've been given the green light—next time it will be 12 municipalities in one bill that will be made bigger and better, according to this government.

What municipalities are next on the chopping block? What small towns and local communities are going to be put into this bigger is better model that this government's fallen in love with? What's next?

The interesting thing about this model too is that we hear the government preaching about this amalgamation, that this downsizing of elected officials is the key to efficiency, is the key to better, more accountable government, and you never hear them refer to the 905 area in this regard. I wonder why.

In the 905 area we have over 28 city local governments; we have over 214 elected officials. Not one of them has been downsized, not one bit of change has been undertaken by this government, yet they're saying, "We have to do this in Ottawa, in Hamilton, we have to do this in Toronto." In fact, in Toronto, they're saying they had to do it twice.

The minister's own city of Brampton has a population of 285,000; it has 17 councillors. The small city of Caledon has nine representatives. You never hear the minister talk about downsizing those municipalities in the 905 area. There's some further review, there's a further study, there's more delay, so therefore there's a double standard when it comes to the municipalities in the 905 area and the ones in the rest of the province.

They say, "We have to set up these provincial boundaries and copy the provincial boundaries." Why are the provincial boundaries not being copied for the 905 area? Why aren't the provincial boundaries being copied in Sudbury and Ottawa or Hamilton? They're not using the provincial boundaries there, but in Toronto they say that's the best way to do it, yet in this legislation, it doesn't put forth the provincial boundaries.

So there is this double standard between what they're doing in the 905 area, especially where they have many politicians and many local governments. In fact, in the

905 area, with this bill they've created another permanent political position, a very powerful position in the region of Halton where the chairman will now be directly elected. If they're going to be downsizing the 905 area, why would they be creating a permanently elected regional chairman in Halton?

This is supposed to be about downsizing. They're upsizing. Why would you upsize in Halton and downsize everywhere else? Why do the little towns get wiped out, then Halton gets a directly elected regional chairman? That is a contradiction in this bill. It goes contrary to what they're saying, because they say they want to eliminate all these tiers while they have just reinforced the regional tier in Halton by having a permanently elected chairman of Halton, and that's in this bill. This bill is supposed to be about downsizing politicians and getting rid of layers of government, while they're reinforcing again that second tier in Halton. That is something I want the minister to explain.

Another thing I'm very concerned about is that this bill allows for the appointment of trusteeships in the four cities. That's what they are: They are trusteeships that essentially usurp the democratic power of the councils in Hamilton, Ottawa, Sudbury and Haldimand-Norfolk. In other words, folks, once this bill is passed, the people you elected as local officials and mayors basically have to obey appointed trustees who are hand-picked by this government behind closed doors. Those trustees will also be able to tell the local councillors how much they are going to get paid, and the local councillors have to agree to whatever money they need. I know that in Ottawa they are already asking for \$2 million to pay the trustees. So these unelected people are going to come into each town or city, and democracy and local government will basically be suspended. The elected officials will just be like bureaucrats who will be told what to do by appointed trustees in each of those cities.

1730

Some people say: "Anything to get the job done. If we have to suspend the councils, we'll do it." That's what this bill does. It puts in place a trusteeship where the people in those cities will no longer have their elected officials making the decisions. The budgets will be set by the trustees for this year and next year. That's what these unelected people will do. They'll set the budget, and they'll set the mill rate. In fact, Mr Speaker, I don't know if you're aware of it, but these trustees will be hiring the top civil servants in those cities, and those contracts will have to be abided by, by the local councils that get elected some time in the future. These trustees in each of these cities have an extreme amount of power.

An interesting thing in this bill too is that if these trustees sit around a table and pass a resolution, that resolution supersedes local bylaws. I know that people are going to say: "Big deal. It's city government. It's local politicians. Who cares?" I just hope there are some Ontarians out there who, even though they may agree with some of the restructuring—as I said, I can understand why some people in Hamilton—I know the region-

al chairman of Hamilton, Mr Cooke, is here. He has fought long and hard for a vision of government in Hamilton that he believes in, and he has the right to espouse that view. But even beyond those who believe in that type of government, we have to look at how this is done.

Is it right to have this dictatorial clause in this bill which allows the amendment of any act behind closed doors? Is it right to suspend democracy in those four cities and have these appointed members of this transition team, this trusteeship, make decisions that elected officials were elected to make? I ask people out there whether they accept this approach of suspending normal democracy. For what? The end justifies the means? Is it a national emergency? Will the province fall apart if we don't pass this bill?

As you know, a similar bill was passed in Toronto in 1997. It wasn't passed until the new year, and we still had the elections. But they're telling us, "You have to pass it by January 1 because of the elections." That's a red herring. We passed the Toronto megacity bill in April 1997 and still had elections, and things went on as usual. There is an artificial January deadline here because this government is afraid of public hearings. It is afraid for the public to see what is in this bill.

I think that many honest Ontarians, when they see this suspension of local democratic process, will begin to wonder whether they need to go to this arbitrary means to restructure local government. That's why I ask, why this extreme use of arbitrary means for local restructuring? You can do it without arbitrary means. These means are not necessary. If these powers are given to this government in this bill, they will introduce this type of clause, this type of approach, all the way down the road. Now, it's just municipal governments. I wonder what other legislation will have this kind of arbitrary, dictatorial power. I think it sets a horrendous precedent that I hope Ontarians will start to be concerned about, because it could be your hospital, your community police department, your fire department that gets affected by these arbitrary means that you have no say over.

Another interesting thing which really scares a lot of local officials is the provision about the 75 unelected officials coming into a city or town or township. Basically, if 75 unelected people sign a petition, they could ask the government to bring in a restructuring commission and overrule anything the council has done. Any 75 people can do that. I think that again really smacks the face of local autonomy and the right of local officials to govern the town or city they were elected to govern. This government is basically saying: "We don't care what the local officials have done. We are going to allow for 75 people to sign a petition and they can bring in the provincial government and ask them to impose a solution."

This legislation, again and again, is about imposed solutions. It's about arbitrary measures. It's about excessive intervention by this provincial government into

municipal affairs. The contradiction is here. This is the same government that has been downloading like crazy. They are saying you have to be more independent as local municipalities, yet they keep interfering in the municipalities every time we turn around. This government is constantly intervening in the decisions, in the makeup of council, in every aspect of local government at every turn. Meanwhile, they're not giving them any money, yet they want to make all the decisions here at Queen's Park. What they should do, perhaps, is have one big megacity run out of Queen's Park, have maybe two or three councillors represent the whole province. Maybe that's the next step. That's the road they're going down.

You wonder what the rationale is here. If you keep on saying, "We've got to make things bigger and bigger and bigger," the question is, what about local say, local representation? What about local input? In most of these cities, you're now going to have to drive 30, 40, 50, 60, 100 kilometres to go to a council meeting. How many people will go to that council meeting? How many people will see their local mayor or their local councillor? They won't see them. Do you know who will see the local mayors and councillors? It will be the big shots.

That's what happening here in Toronto. The big lobbyists, the big lawyers, the high-rollers get to see the big councillors and the big mayors. It's difficult for the councillors to get out in the community because there are going to be so few of them and the area to cover, geographically alone, is a real challenge.

Again, this government believes, I think, that it's easier perhaps to control smaller councils, because they fear local councillors speaking out. We know that. They don't want people in Dundas saying something and people in East York saying something else. They want everybody singing from the same hymn book because it makes it a lot easier down here at central headquarters to rule this province. That's what they are doing here. They're basically making it easier for the bureaucrats.

I read Professor Peter Sancton, who is maybe one of the best experts on municipal restructuring, municipal consolidation. His conclusion is—

Interjection.

Mr Colle: This is Andrew Sancton—excuse me. Here's an interesting quote from Andrew Sancton of the University of Western Ontario:

"Given its lack of theoretical intellectual equipment, the Harris government apparently stumbled into the megacity solution. Once the policy was decided, serious debate was not possible. Government spokespersons from Premier Harris down to officials within the Ministry of Municipal Affairs could only repeat the mantra, 'megacity,' 'eliminate a layer of government,' 'reduced overlap and duplication,' and 'cut the number of politicians.' Such words were congruent with the vocabulary of the CSR. The fact that the policy itself violated its core idea, the need for less government, more efficient government and more responsive government, was by this stage immaterial."

In other words, this is supposed to be a government about small government, about less government. All of a sudden they've gone the direct opposite. They are creating megabureaucracies that will have so many bureaucrats making hundreds of thousands of dollars. As my friends from Prince Edward-Hastings and from Sudbury say, the big, highly paid bureaucrats won't be knocking on your doors. They won't be going down the street to your local fairs and community events. Those big-paid bureaucrats will not be accessible. That is going to be the change. Certainly you'll save some money by eliminating some of these councillors, but how much money will it cost to pay for these high-paid administrators and bureaucrats? That's who will be running these cities and towns. It won't be the ugly local councils.

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We know how ugly local councils can be. They're ugly but they're effective. Some of them are not effective but at least they're trying. The small wardens, the mayors, they pitch in. But these bureaucrats—the Tories are going to now pay \$120,000. They won't be at your local fairs; they won't be there when the pothole has 10 inches of water in it; they won't be there when your kid's park equipment has fallen apart. Try to phone that bureaucrat at Queen's Park now. That's what it's going to be like when you try and phone a bureaucrat in these megacities. That is the problem.

I know the public at first blush says: "Great. Get rid of the politicians." We all know that's the first reaction. Everybody says, "Great." The second reaction is: "Who do I call? I can't fix the swing in my child's park." You try calling voice mail and see if voice mail will come over and fix the swing in the park. They won't do it.

I also want to mention that there are so many priorities in this province that need addressing. To the north of this city, in the 905 area, we have the planning process in virtual collapse, where local and regional plans are not being adhered to by the developers, and they're leap-frogging over that to the municipal board. We have delicate waterways, delicate rivers and streams that are being bulldozed by unbridled development. This government feels: "That's not a priority. Our priority is re-jigging municipal government." Why wouldn't the government put its priorities straight and get that planning process in place around the greater Toronto area to protect the Oak Ridges moraine, to protect against urban sprawl, to do something about urban transportation gridlock? That isn't a priority. A priority is doing something to make these megacities pop up everywhere. That's this government's priority. That doesn't solve one thing.

Your own members have said, "Bigger doesn't solve things." Just because you make a government bigger, it doesn't solve things. If that had been the case, the Soviet Union would have been the best-governed country in the world, because they loved bigness. They really had it on for things that were big: the big plans, the big centres. Big government was their byword. Now, this government says, "We're going to follow the Soviet model of big."

If you look at certain circumstances, where maybe the people of Sudbury or the people of Haldimand-Norfolk want a certain solution—and we're getting into a reasonable size—what worries me is the pattern that it's always the elimination of the small for the big. These sizes shouldn't be the only benchmark, the only litmus test for good government. But this government believes there's an axiom: "Big size, good government. Small size, bad government." That is really contradictory to all the traditions and history of this province. In fact, I would say that big government in some cases has been harmful to the local citizen getting his or her wants and needs met.

I would ask the government, if they're really into a deadline, why aren't they into a deadline about fixing the chaotic planning process in 905, where local and regional plans aren't worth the paper they're written on and local municipalities have to spend \$1 million to go to the OMB to protect a watershed? That's what it has come to. That's a priority. Why not go there and work to protect areas that are being impacted on by unbridled development?

A word of warning too: This government has proudly said, "We're doing this because we did it in Toronto; it worked so well in Toronto." I say, luckily in Toronto we've had a very effective mayor who has worked darn hard for two years, non-stop, making this thing work. He has made it work. But if you ask him if this government has helped him, you'll see that this government has done everything but help him. Don't think that just because you're a megacity, you're going to be able to do basically what you want to do, because this government will keep downloading on you. Even though Toronto has created a megacity, this government still downloaded \$250 million.

This government had to lend Toronto \$200 million and give them a grant of \$50 million to get them through the transition. That's why our party is saying: "Look at the Toronto experience. There should be transition money commitments in this bill." There isn't a cent committed. Hamilton is going to need millions of dollars for the transition. As Shortliffe said, Ottawa should have about \$35 million. Haldimand-Norfolk—everyone is going to need millions of dollars in transition funds because these transitions are extremely expensive.

You should be aware of the fact that even the mayor of Kingston, Mayor Gary Bennett, who has gone through a small transition, said that the process of transition takes longer than anyone can imagine and the costs are higher than anticipated. The process is a complex one. That's why the member for Sudbury and the member for Hamilton East and I are encouraging and imploring this government that as you ram this bill down the throats of members of this Legislature, you have to have some transition money as part of the package, because if the transition money isn't here you will be forcing local municipalities like Sudbury to go into debt, raise taxes or cut services to pay for the transition costs. The transition costs are real. You have to pay severance packages. It will be millions of dollars in severance packages.

The harmonization of services: I encourage the minister to put on the table of this Legislature a cost-benefit analysis of the transition and harmonization costs in Toronto. He won't do it because they haven't done it. But if you talk to the bureaucrats and the elected officials at the city of Toronto, they'll tell you the harmonization of services is expensive, because you have to bring in consultants. The consultants will love this bill. The consultants will be crawling all over Ottawa, all over Hamilton. They'll be saying: "Hire me. I'll show you how to harmonize your garbage department, your roads department." The consultants look upon this as their pension plan. I call Bill 25 the consultants' pension plan; that's what it is. When you pass this bill, the consultants will be happy that they're going to have all kinds of work for the next five years. Harmonizing services is expensive.

The contradiction is you have to let go elected officials and you have to let go bureaucrats to save money—because they're claiming it's going to save money. So when you're cutting them all, who's going to make the decisions on how to harmonize? What do you do? "Oh, we've got Andersen Consulting. They're going to come in here and tell us how to harmonize services in Sudbury." You harmonize services, so you have to pay these consulting firms millions of dollars to basically do what the fired bureaucrats, or the ones who have been severed, and the local politicians could have done for you, but they're not going to be around any more so you're going to have to hire consultants. As I said, I'm sure the consultants are all lined up right now. In fact, they've probably already made appointments to see the minister.

Interjection: Here comes the gravy train.

Mr Colle: Yes, they look upon it as the gravy train. So with Bill 25, consultants are smiling from ear to ear. Municipal consulting is a growth business in this province.

Interjection: It's only American consultants.

Mr Colle: Americans or whoever it is.

One of the things in this bill which is very peculiar—and we discussed this during the megacity bill—is variable tax rates. Either you want amalgamation or you don't. Here they're saying, "We want amalgamation, but we're going to have different tax rates and different service levels in these new unified cities." So the question is again, do you want amalgamation or don't you? Because amalgamation means one tax rate, one level of service across the municipality. This bill hedges its bets. I think there was a little pressure from Nepean, probably. They're saying, "Perhaps what we should have is a tax rate that's a little lower here, one that's higher there." Either it's a megacity, it's one city, or it isn't. But this bill is saying, "We are going to come together, yet we're going to have different tax rates."

If you have different tax rates and different levels of service, that's what city halls are about; that's what local government is about. You're doing all this work, all this preaching, the mantra about saving money and doing this for the right reasons, yet you're going to have two basic

contradictory facts in this bill: different service levels for different parts of the megacity, and tax rates that are different. How does this make sense? I just can't imagine how you're going to do it. Who is going to pay the higher taxes? I guess in Cumberland we're going to have the lower taxes, because we've got a member there; and in Nepean we're going to have to have a lower rate because a member is there.

1750

Remember that the minister decides that, because in this bill the minister, by regulation, can adjust anything. So if they want to lower that tax in Cumberland, the minister can do it, but will he do it in downtown Ottawa? Will he do it in Dundas? What will the tax rate be in Dundas? What will the tax rate be in Ancaster or Delhi? We don't know, because the minister will decide what the tax rate is going to be. By regulation, behind closed doors, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, through the trusteeship, will decide who can have their garbage picked up once or twice a week, what fire services—and fire services are an interesting thing.

They told us in Toronto, "We're going to have this amalgamation." Do you know that the fire services still haven't been harmonized in Toronto? We still have the six fire departments. They said, "If you amalgamate them, it's going to cost you \$3 million or \$4 million more and you're going to have to build about three more stations." So everybody said, "Oh yes, but if you put them all together, you have one chief." Yes, but you have one big chief and then you have five superchiefs. So don't think you're going to do this simply, that just because this bill is passed it's instant savings. There are many pitfalls.

That's why I think it's important for residents and members who represent areas in Haldimand-Norfolk or Hamilton or Ottawa to ask for those figures on the Toronto experience. Ask them how much money they had to give to bail Toronto out. Despite the bailout for Toronto, Toronto is facing a debt that is going to \$2.5 billion because they can't survive. All you have in these cities, remember, all this gives you, is property taxes. All these services—health services, fire services, police—are all on the backs of property taxpayers.

If you look at the Toronto track record, this government hasn't helped at all. They are going to download more responsibility on these cities and then they're going to say: "You're big enough now. You can survive on your own. We don't have to help you any more." It gives them a great excuse to off-load, to download and to say: "Local government, it's your fault again. We helped you. You wouldn't do it." That's what they're going to do. That's what they told us in Toronto. It's basically walking away from accountability. It's saying that local government is disposable.

I know there are a few members who have sat on local government and I know that some of you who have know that there's give and take. There's a lot of input from local citizens, and that takes time and effort. It's some-

thing that we have to recognize as part of our tradition of parliamentary, legislative, representative democracy.

These big governments with very few councillors aren't the answer to all of our problems, but this government has this fixation—except for the 905, though; there big government, lots of government, lots of politicians. “Give them another regional chairman in Halton; 905, you can have government coming out of your ears; 905, it's OK, Jack,” because in 905 they don't need fewer politicians, they need more politicians. We know that. So that is what is happening.

The other interesting thing is just the way these things are done. I guess the most galling thing for the people of Toronto was when on a Thursday the minister announced that by sundown Saturday the council of Toronto had better make up its mind whether it wanted 44 or 22 politicians. That was the minister's ultimatum. We know you can say, “The local councils don't count; the mayor doesn't count,” but that is also an affront to the 2.3 million people of Toronto who elected them. To give the people of Toronto an ultimatum like that is disgraceful. Even though you may agree that a downsizing of council is something you should do, when on a Thursday afternoon you stand there and say, “By sundown Saturday, you better do this or else,” this is no way to run a government. It is no way to treat the people of Toronto. This ultimatum-type politics does not help get people to understand how this government works and it certainly makes them wonder what the motives are. That is something that has to be on the record.

The other thing is that we must remember that we're seeing a real watershed, we're seeing a real change in government in this province. This bill marks, I think, in essence a pretty strong signal that rural municipalities are not to be taken as important parts of this government, because the rural municipalities are going to be swallowed up in these bigger cities and the urban centres will no doubt dominate. That's a very clear indication from this bill for those small rural areas, whether it be in the Hamilton area, in the Ottawa area, in all those small towns that had quaint little governments—cities, towns, townships. They are basically now being told, “You are not part of the future of this province.”

It's too bad that we couldn't have had a government that would look at things in a more, let's say—

Interjection: Responsible.

Mr Colle:—responsible and accountable way and say: “Maybe let's try to keep small governments in one of the areas. Perhaps let's experiment with the Ottawa area and try to see if small governments work there. Let the rural municipalities flourish. Give them some support. Give the the small towns—the Ancasters, the Dundases, the Flamboroughs, the Kanatas of this world—a chance and see if they could grow into the millennium as the new centres of economic activity.” That would be quite revolutionary for this government.

I was glad to see they at least didn't go to that mega-model in Haldimand-Norfolk. They split the megacity

into two there, thank God. At least that area wasn't mega-sized. There are only 100,000 people there.

So we certainly require public hearings: one day in Nanticoke, one day in Dundas. Please, just one day, we're saying, one morning in each one of those centres, and let's hear the local people come out and express to this Legislature the fact that they're not just lines on a map, as the minister said; that Fitzroy Harbour is not a line on a map. All these small communities have a history, have a soul.

I know they're going to say, “Well, this won't change that,” but it does change it. Once you take away that city hall, that town hall, pretty soon other things disappear. The library's gone because now it's part of a mega-library, and they say: “You can't have a library here. You have to drive 20 kilometres to the library.” So the library disappears. The community centre: “Well, we can't have this little one here. It doesn't meet the new mega-standards.” So we on this side of the House would love to see this government hold hearings in the local areas where they're being hit with this.

There are going to be a lot of people who are going to support some of this. We know that. But I think the people who have questions should be heard. I'd like to hear the people up and down the Ottawa Valley talk about this bill, because they're going to get it next, up Pembroke way. I'd like to hear the people in Flam- borough talk about this bill, what they think of it, and the commitment that Mike Harris made; he was very clear in the last election.

Let's go to the communities an hour, two hours, just to hear from people or have committee meetings on this bill, because this may not mean a lot to the big guys on Bay Street, but I'll tell you, all the small retailers, the small merchants, the small shopkeepers, the people that used to go to city hall and raise hell down at the local council now will have to drive or telephone or get on the Internet: “We'll give you a 1-800 number. Call city hall.” That's not going to work. That isn't democracy. Democracy is accessibility; democracy is being able to confront your local politician and give him or her ideas and also let him know what's wrong. But as I said, this government is intent on saying, “We are now going to save you money by hiring consultants, bureaucrats, and the bureaucrats and consultants will decide the future of your community.”

I really implore people to at least get more information on this bill. We don't have enough time because the government is dead set on ramming this thing through by the end of the week, and I don't know how people are going to be able to look at this. I just hope they realize that the other cities in Ontario are going to be faced with the same cookie-cutter approach. So it's not just the people in Sudbury who are asking questions. Maybe it'll be Prince Edward county next. Will they amalgamate Picton-Belleville-Deseronto? They'll probably make the big city of Deseronto. That's what's coming next, in the next mega-bill. Once you set this pattern of one big bill,

then it's bigger bills and bigger bills, to the point you have nothing to say—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Colle: —just the bureaucrats and the lobbyists—

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATA

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
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26A	1301	2	57-58	Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Don King? He spent all of his life in court.
26A	1302	1	4-5	Hon Mrs Marland: No, his name is John King. Mr Martin: Oh, John King. Not the promoter of boxing.

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