



No. 90B

Nº 90B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 17 October 2000

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 17 octobre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 October 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 octobre 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SOCIAL HOUSING REFORM ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA RÉFORME DU LOGEMENT SOCIAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 16, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 128, An Act respecting social housing / Projet de loi 128, Loi concernant le logement social.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): I believe the member for Trinity-Spadina is up.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I just made it in time. I was a bit worried about that. I was going to go wash my hands. Because I have a whole hour, I wanted my hands to be clean before the debate, right?

I didn't get a chance to do that. I had to rush in. That's why I want to let the 400,000 people watching know that we need more New Democrats in this place. That's what we need, more New Democrats. We can't do it alone. We need a New Democratic Party, I can tell you; otherwise, we'll have a two-party system as they do in the US. I've got to tell you, I don't know who's worse there, whether it's the Republicans or the Democrats. Is this what we want at the federal level? This is not what we need at the federal level. If you really want a party that is the social conscience of the people—at least that—you need us New Democrats.

Speaker, before I begin, I just want to say hello to my niece again, Celina Marchese. She's watching this program. Celina, a few people are clapping for you, including the Minister of Health, God bless her. She's got a tough job in this place, the Minister of Health. She's under a lot of criticism and under a lot of stress. She's doing the best she can in this good economy—not good enough, but she's doing the best she can. So I wanted to say hello to you, Celina, and I hope you become a good New Democratic politician when you get older.

I want to get into the bill, Bill 128, another big bill. I don't know where these poor civil servants find the time to produce these things—with fewer staff, because they fired about 20,000 people, remember, as a way of saying we've got too many bureaucrats, there's too much fat in the province. So there are a couple of people left to do

the job. I don't know how they're doing it, slaving night and day, working harder and longer for less money than ever before. God bless the bureaucrats, the ones these Tories criticize on a regular basis.

I want to start talking about this issue by attacking the federal Liberals—not because there's an election. I don't want to do that. It's a proviso here. I'm not doing it simply because I like to beat up on Liberals. I don't do that for that reason.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I know you're going to move away from that.

Mr Marchese: I want to focus on that for a few brief moments and then move away. I just want to say to the Liberal cousins who are here that my attack is a legitimate one, and I think many of them support it too. I know that because I've talked to many and they're concerned about what the federal Liberals have done. I know that. You are on my side, I'm assuming, as I attack them as gently as I can.

The federal Liberals, through M. Martin, you will recall, in 1990 co-authored a report with another member whose name escapes me. In that report, they talked about having a national strategy for housing. In fact, Mr Martin was committed to the idea that what was needed was a national presence and a willingness by a national government to be involved in the housing business.

You can imagine that those of us who were interested in housing and having a role for government in the construction of housing were, of course, excited by that report. And of course providers and people who are socially concerned, who worry about whether or not everyone has adequate housing, decent housing, were lobbying this now minister, at the time just a regular opposition member. They had high hopes for this government when they came into power in 1993, assuming that this member, Mr Martin, who then became the Minister of Finance, would have a lot of credibility with the government—he wields a lot of power, certainly financial, being one of the right-hand men of M. Chrétien, if not the left, but I suspect more the right—and that because of his power and persuasion and influence, we would have a national housing strategy.

1850

I've got to tell those of you taxpayers who are watching, that national strategy that M. Martin spoke about in 1990 just disappeared when they got elected in 1993. It just disappeared. Not only did they not talk about housing and not only did they not talk about a national involvement on housing matters, they got out of the field

altogether. They started making deals—yes, even with the enemy that is here called the Conservative government. I know they were reluctant in the beginning, but they made a deal with them too.

What they have done, essentially, is to get out of the housing business by making agreements with provinces and territories so that they would no longer be involved as a government. That's not a national strategy; that's a national disgrace. Abandoning your role as a government in the field of housing is not a strategy, it's a disgrace, and people have to know that. When M. Chrétien says, "It's the Tories that are bad, but we have a heart," you've got to know that the Liberals don't have a heart; they just speak about having a heart at the national level in this regard.

These are the very same Liberals, by the way, the ones who say they have a big heart, who reduced their deficit on the backs of the unemployed. In fact, 40% of deficit reduction was due to the cuts they made to unemployment insurance benefits, the very benefits that people should enjoy, the very program that people pay into as an employment insurance program. Yet the government, having a surplus of billions of dollars, took away from the very people who ought to benefit, the very people who are paying into that program. That was the same Liberal government with a heart.

So you have to disabuse those who have this notion that this justice thing that M. Trudeau talked about when he was there 25 years ago is no longer there. It disappeared a long time ago, disappearing slowly because they have a strong desire to keep the Reform Party at bay—the former Reform, the former Social Credit, now the Canadian Alliance Party. It's all the same gang, the same gang with a different name. The Liberals, wanting to keep them at bay, have given the same tax cuts that the Tories have given here at the provincial level so they can be the party for everyone.

Housing has disappeared from the national scene because they have downloaded that responsibility to these fine Tories, and these fine Tories have downloaded their responsibility to the municipal government. What is the difference between the attacks this government makes on the federal government for getting out of the field and their own justification to get out of the field in the area of housing? What is the difference? What is that logic except—Minister, don't go away. Come sit here with us; talk with us a little bit. Don't go. We need you here. Stay for a little while. Gesture with me so that we can talk, you and I. Please, come.

He's leaving and he won't be able to see the dynamics of this discussion. That's OK. He doesn't have to listen, because I'm talking to you directly. I'm not talking to him. He's gone already; I'm talking to you directly.

Imagine. Devolution of a very essential responsibility to the municipal government is, in my view—were I a religious man, I would call it a sin, and if you are a religious person, I would say it is a sin. I put it under that rubric for a very good reason. First, provincial government ought to have that responsibility for something as

very basic as housing. It isn't something you should download to the municipality. It's something you ought to be keeping. And the federal government shouldn't devolve its responsibility to the provincial government; it's something they need to keep as well.

Why do you think in the 1970s we had the construction of rental accommodation, of public housing in Ontario and in Canada? Because the feds got into the field, because provinces and the feds and municipalities worked on it together. The reason we have nothing today is because the feds are out, and the reason we have nothing in Ontario is because the provincial government doesn't want to be involved any more.

In fact, M. Coburn, the parliamentary assistant, in his remarks said, "We have ended the boondoggle." By that he means the boondoggle that New Democrats created. What is that boondoggle? That boondoggle that we created was—

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): Creating non-profit housing.

Mr Marchese: Creating non-profit housing. Exactly, David, non-profit housing and co-operative housing. Is it such a bad thing? Mr Tilson, the member for Dufferin-Peel, says that it was bad. I'm going to tell him why it's bad so his taxpayers know. His private sector friends said, "It's competition. It's too much competition for us. The government ought not be involved in the construction of housing, because they compete with us."

What does that mean? It means that the private developer and the landlord were not able, with the construction of non-profit and co-operative housing, to make the kind of profits they're making under this government. They wanted us out of the field, and the government obliged because they are the instrument of the corporate sector. That's why it was bad. So they manufactured some language that goes well with a lot of their taxpayers. "It was a boondoggle," they said. It sounds good. It's a boondoggle; that must be bad. It ran well with them. It ran well with their supporters, and their landlords, my God, they love it. They lap it up like you wouldn't believe, like hungry dogs to that plate of food.

I understand someone is organizing an event for Mr Day, and I believe it's \$25,000 a plate.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Someone said no, it's \$25,000 per table. OK, that might be. I thought it was per person. This guy reports they're not going to have any problem filling the hall with \$25,000 a plate. Let's say I misread it and it's \$25,000 per table. Can you conceive of that per table? That would be what? It would be \$2,000-some-odd a person. Do you have that kind of money, Speaker, to go to an event and pay to support your own party? No, you don't. You don't have \$2,000 for that kind of purpose. But these guys can find their corporate buddies who give of their paltry little sums, pocket change for them, so they can serve their interests by going to Mr Day's event.

It's the same problem with Mike Harris, because they have \$700 events, and Mr McGuinty had a \$600 event, I want to tell you that. That is bad.

Mr Bartolucci: Howie had an event in Sudbury last weekend.

Mr Marchese: How much was his event?

Mr Bartolucci: I think it was \$550.

Mr Marchese: Come on. What are you going to invent next? You guys are going to invent some other number. Manufacture a number; it doesn't matter.

David Tilson, how much do you think our events are?

Mr Tilson: He will do it for five bucks.

Mr Marchese: Five bucks. You see how he manufactures again here and says five bucks. It's not true. My events are \$25 a pop. I can't get people to go to an event where I charge them \$100.

Some of our events at the NDP national level and provincial level, it's true, might be \$100. And yes, there's a line that says if you want to contribute more, like \$200, \$500 or \$1,000—who in our party has that kind of money to give to us? Who?

But these people have a lot of buddies they have helped to serve over the years and it's payback. That's what it's about; it's payback. Good people of Ontario, this is where your taxpayer dollars are going. They're going to these Tories because they serve the interests of the corporate sector and have you believe they're saving you money. That's what the game is about.

1900

We have to talk straight because you're the only ones, watching this debate, who are able to come to some decision or conclusion about what you hear from us. It's as direct as you can get it. You're not going to get it anywhere else. That's why I urge public involvement; that's why I urge civic involvement as a way of shaping our province, because without it all we've got is the millions of taxpayers dollars that Mike Harris is spending to convince you, day in and day out, that they're saving you money.

We need you badly to get out of your seats and out of your chairs and out of your homes to go to meetings and to be critical about what this government is doing. For that you need to be attentive and alert, and you've got to take the time to write to the Premier when you disagree with him.

Downloading of housing is one such critical matter that I urge you to pay attention to. Why are they downloading this responsibility to the property tax owner? That's where it's being shifted. They are shifting this responsibility to the tenants who pay property taxes and to the landlords who own homes and pay property taxes. That's where the money is coming from to pay for the housing. That's dumb. It's stupid. It's politics that in my view you cannot endure, you cannot accept.

Why is it a regressive thing to do? It's regressive because the property tax base ought not to be the venue for the maintenance and the paying of our public housing. It ought not to be. It's wrong. Over the last couple of years I've said that it's wrong. I continue to say it's wrong because it will be a tremendous problem for the municipalities and a tremendous mistake.

I want to speak to you directly. When the cities have a financial problem—as they have, as a result of which we've seen the loss of service in our municipalities. When Mayor Mel gets elected in the next election, as I suspect he will, he's going to have some more problems with the property tax because he's not going to raise property taxes. If he does, it'll be a very modest increase, maybe 1%, 2%. He can't do more than that; he's going to get killed, unless he plans to retire three years hence. Then he might gouge the tenants and the homeowners a little more. He might squeeze them. That's possible. But I'm not sure he's going to do that, because property tax owners are tired of paying the property taxes that they have been paying on their homes. Most of them would rather pay income tax than a property tax on their home, and it's a fairer thing to do. We should be taking from the income tax as a way of paying for our housing and not taking from the property tax base. It's not fair; it's not right.

You know that seniors own homes. You all know you own homes, and you pay taxes irrespective of the income that you have. Federal governments and municipal governments—at least this government has no interest in making it easier for you seniors who pay a hefty property tax on your home. Yes, they know you're not making as much as you used to when you were working, but they don't care about that. You pay a hefty property tax on your property whether you have the income or not.

You are going to be saddled with the cost of the maintenance of this public housing. If Mayor Mel doesn't increase your property tax base, then you may not suffer but the people in public housing will suffer. There's no magic around that. Either you increase property taxes to keep the services going or you keep the property tax base at zero and something's got to give.

I know municipal politicians. Do you think, like Mr Stockwell here, the Minister of Labour, when he was a city councillor, that if he had to serve a public housing sector versus the homeowners of a street that he would choose the public housing, MTHA, the metro housing authority, over a block of his homeowners in his area? I've got to tell you, he wouldn't do that. You wouldn't do that.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: He laughs because he knows he wouldn't do that. He would be supporting his homeowners because, he says, and other municipal politicians say, they vote. "At least I know homeowners vote, and they're angry." He knows that the tenants are not out there screaming bloody murder for the taxes that they're paying, because it's hidden in the price that they pay, in the rent. He knows that. He also knows many of them don't vote, but he knows the homeowners vote.

So when there is a financial crunch at the municipal level, who do you think is going to suffer? It won't be the homeowner. It's going to be the people in public housing, in the metro housing authority, in Cityhome, in the non-profit homes and in the co-operative homes. They will all suffer. I can guarantee that, because there won't be the money to help them out. That's just the way it is.

The Tory commitment was to get out of the housing business, and they did that. They cancelled 117 of our projects that we had on the go when we were in government, which amounted to, I think, 16,000 units. Imagine how that would have helped so many people who are lining up. They're lining up for a decent, affordable home and there's nothing to be gotten because they cancelled those projects. They're not putting money into the construction of housing. If anything, they made it worse.

Speaker, you remember the Tenant Protection Act. I know you do. Alvin, you remember the Tenant Protection Act. That so-called act that was supposed to help out the—

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): The foundation of Bill 61.

Mr Marchese: This was the bill, the Tenant Protection Act, that was supposed to help tenants. This was the bill to help the landlords. The landlords are the biggest lapdogs these people have and they are really snorking at the public trough, I can tell you. They did well in the last couple of years through their Tenant Protection Act. Mr Tilson, the member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, has no problem with that, because as far as he's concerned the other one was a boondoggle. But giving a whole lot of money to the private sector is not a boondoggle. Oh, no, that's helping his friends. These people have money and they help to create jobs, so that's OK. But to create housing for those who can't afford it, those powerless individuals who have no money to find decent, affordable housing? Mr Tilson says, "Ha. It was a boondoggle."

Mr Tilson: It was.

Mr Marchese: He keeps on saying, "Yeah, it was." It's OK. It's OK that people are in line-ups waiting for subsidies, waiting for affordable, decent homes. My God, we can't worry about everyone in this society. But we can worry about giving tax cuts to the wealthiest individuals in this province, because why? So that when they have their \$1,000 fundraisers or \$2,000 or \$10,000 fundraisers, they can have the landlord bring the cheque, just walk it in. You don't have to come. Don't worry. Just send the cheque in. That's what it's about.

We need in this province people who care about others who are not as lucky as we are, not as lucky as those of us who have jobs. We need you to worry about it, because this government is not worried about that. At least the red Tories, when they were here 30 years ago, worried about the public interest. There was a certain benevolence toward those who could least protect themselves. At least they had that. These people don't have any conscience whatsoever when they can throw thousands and thousands of people on the street and be smug about it.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): That's not true.

Mr Marchese: Defend yourself, Minister of Health, when it's your turn. I want to hear from you. It's not true? You have thrown thousands and thousands of

people on the street. The line-ups are endless. The line-ups are from here all the way to St Catharines, Kitchener, to wherever you're from. It's a long, long line of people, people who don't make \$110,000 a year, people who only make \$20,000, \$25,000, \$30,000 dollars a year, working hard and longer for less. They don't have the luxury that a minister making \$120,000 a year has. They don't have the luxury of their corporate friends who make millions and millions of dollars and can buy a home on the Bridle Path and not worry about where these other poor little people might live, if they have a place.

But, citizens of Ontario, you've got to worry about it. The nature of humanity is about that; the nature of citizenship is about that; that if we have, and someone doesn't, we find a way of sharing with them. That's what it ought to be about. At least the Tories understood that, the old red Tories. These people don't; they've forgotten it.

1910

We have a housing crisis and they're not solving it. I'll tell you why they're not solving it: because when the crisis gets worse, they're going to give away so much money to the private developer that they're going to be the happiest creatures on this land, like the old times, like the 1970s, when the money would roll in and the developer would be able to build because we, the government, were there, throwing the money out to them in wheelbarrows. "See, here, come and get it." This government, in a couple of years, is going to go there with a wheelbarrow, like they're doing with Andersen Consulting—taking half a million American over the border; the landlords and the developers, with the barrows, taking the money out and building housing.

That would be their solution to the crisis, but that won't be called a boondoggle, will it, member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey? That will be called a responsible action by a responsible government to make sure that those who need homes will get it. That's what it will be called. Their bill will have something to that effect. A Conservative, responsible government creates housing by giving millions and millions of subsidies to the private sector; otherwise those people are going to be starving out there and be out on the street. That's what they're going to call it. Right, Mr Tilson, member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey? Speak with me, speak with me and keep me alive here.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Oh, it's still a boondoggle, but it won't be a boondoggle when they give to the private sector, the developer, millions and millions of our taxpayers' dollars. That won't be called a boondoggle. That'll be called just being the instrument of the corporate sector.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: OK, and we go back to the same stuff. OK, I'm going to be reasonable.

Let's just assume for a moment that what we did was a problem. Let's just assume that for a moment. We now have a housing crisis. Let's just assume that maybe some of them will agree with us, because even Conservative

commentators are agreeing that we've got a housing crisis. Mr Ibbetson wrote about that the other day. He said that we have a housing crisis and the Tories ought to "fix the problem."

A number of people say we've got a problem. They, the Tories, say what the NDP did was bad. What do they offer in its place? That's what I'm asking myself. What do they offer in its place to accommodate people of modest means so that they have the right to some kind of decent, affordable home? Mr Tilson, what did you propose about that? What's your answer to that?

He's not engaging me. He's engaging me with his silence and his silence means, "We've got no answer for you, Mr Marchese. We ain't doing nothing because we don't want to do nothing. We rely on the private sector to build." And where's the private sector? The private sector is nowhere to be seen. The private sector is not building at all. We're virtually at a standstill when it comes to public housing, affordable housing. I think last year they created 200 units.

Everybody has been commenting on the level of need in the last couple of years. Everyone has been commenting on what we need. The level of crisis is so incredibly high that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp says we will need about 80,000 units by 2001, which is this year. And we will only have built 6,000 or 5,000 units. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp said that; I'm not saying it. Good listener in Ontario, I'm not saying that. If the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp says we need 81,000 units and we have only built 6,000 or so, doesn't that tell you we have a crisis on our hands?

Yes. What are the Tories doing? They're waiting for the private sector to build. They're just waiting for them, that somehow magically, by some kind of divine intervention, they will build. Mr Clement went genuflecting about six months ago to the builders' association I believe, saying, "Please build some, because I'll look stupid if you don't." And the builders are not building. So poor Mr Clement and poor M. Leach—you remember mon ami M. Leach, who said, "When we introduce this Tenant Protection Act, the private sector will step in and build 10,000 units."

Mr Curling: He's gone.

Mr Marchese: He's gone. Of course he's gone. Why would he stick around for the failure? He's got a good job. The Tories gave him a good job. He's got a good pension. He's doing OK. I hope his dog is doing all right too.

The private sector is not doing its job. Why? Because they're not making money. You don't think that the private sector would be building if they thought they could make a couple of bucks? Of course they would. They're not building because there's no money. So what happens to those poor schleps out there who don't have the money? Listen to Mr Tilson: "Well, it's a boondoggle. Forget about it." OK, it's a boondoggle, forget about it, but we've got thousands of people waiting in line out there and Mr Tilson and these other people—Mr Tascona, I'm sure you'll agree, because you'll stand up

for your two minutes as well—"What the NDP did was just wrong and we're trying. We're doing so much." I'm waiting for Mr Tascona to say all the wonderful things this government is doing to create housing. I'm waiting for that, because they've got nothing.

They decontrolled the rents under the Tenant Protection Act, which means that every time you, tenant, leave one place for another, the landlord can charge whatever he or she wants, and they've been doing it for two years, reaping the benefits of that decontrolling of rents, meaning no rent control, while somebody else moves in as you move out. What a wonderful gift, pecunia, to give away for nothing. You've just got to pass a bill and that's it, and the rich people just make more money under the guise that by doing so they're going to clean up and maintain their buildings. They get close to 3% a year, guideline increases, for which they don't have to explain what it is they're doing—money pocketed away, good Ontarians' money pocketed away, 3.3 million tenants—reaping the benefits of guideline increases for which they do not have to be accountable, money—Mr Tascona is going to sit beside me and help me out; oh, he's not coming here—that will be pocketed by the landlords.

Tenants don't benefit. We go to tenants' meetings on a regular basis to inquire from them what kinds of repairs they're doing. The complaints are eternal. Most landlords, the bad ones in particular, never maintain their buildings in spite of the claims that this government makes. Above-guideline increases are happening all over the province, which were 3% under the NDP and are now 4%. They're happening all over the map. The poor tenant who earns \$25,000 or \$30,000 a year has got no option because, if he or she moves from one building and goes to another, their rent will skyrocket. So they've got to stay in their building. All I urge tenants to do is to fight back. You've got to organize tenants' associations in order to protect your interest. You've got no other choice. You've got no government that's protecting you. The only power you've got is yourself to form tenant organizations in your buildings to defend and protect your interests, and then turf the government out in the next three years when that election comes. It's all you've got; it's the only power you've got.

Mr Coburn, the member from Ottawa-Orléans, said in his remarks with respect to this bill, "Protecting tenants is the number one priority." Can you believe that?

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Yes, he said that. I heard him.

Mr Marchese: Yes. I read the transcripts on purpose. He said protecting tenants is his and his government's number one priority. Can you believe that? It was for that purpose that I talked about the Tenant Protection Act, that serves the interests of the private sector, and the only benefit the tenants have is the title, Tenant Protection Act, and nothing else. For this member to say their number one priority is tenants is laughable. It's a mockery. It demeans tenants. It makes fools of the rest of us who believe him.

1920

He goes on and makes it appear as if the rent geared to income, which will stay at 30% of the income, is somehow written in the act. It isn't written in the act. So do we have the protection? Only inasmuch as you believe the minister and that it will not increase from 30% to 35% or 37% or 38% some other time. It's not in the act, which means the government, strapped for cash on an ongoing basis because all the money is going out to the corporate tax cuts, has got to find money somewhere. It's going to make tenants pay at some point, and the 30% will increase to 35%, lo and behold.

Rent supplements, which some of the tenants get when they are in certain buildings, have been decreased by almost 30% by this government. They have been decreased by this government, not increased in spite of the claims they have made. When you hear these guys, these Tories, saying, "Tenants are our number one priority," it cracks me up. But it doesn't crack me up, as I've said before in a number of other speeches, with joy. It's tragedy. It's tragic humour that one is engaged in in this place when you hear them say stuff like that.

There's other stuff he's said. I'll make reference to a few other things. He talks about extensive, productive discussions with the stakeholders who were the mainstay of this government prior to the introduction of this bill. Which stakeholders? What level of participation did they have? Were they there in legitimate negotiations as to what it is they agreed to or ought to have or what they think is in their best interests? Or did they bring a couple of people together to tell them, "By the way, you don't have any power to change anything here. The only power you've got is to be able to do as we tell you, or else"? The framework for what they wanted, which is in this bill, is here. The few stakeholders they invited had to agree. That was the best they could hope for.

About two months ago, I think it was some kind of conference that brought federal and provincial members together to talk about the desire of Mr Gagliano at the federal level, the Minister of Public Works, to get involved, opening the doors for the construction of housing. It was somewhat humorous to see in the paper the comments of Mr Clement, who said in response to Mr Gagliano's comment that if Mr Gagliano didn't open the doors fast enough, he, Mr Clement, the Minister of Housing, was going to move in and do the job himself—the same minister, the same government, who got out of the housing business, who cancelled the 117 housing projects that the NDP introduced, who said that what we did in the past was a boondoggle and had the temerity to say that if the federal Liberal government doesn't open those doors fast enough to create housing, he was going to do it himself.

You see why I laugh with this tragic kind of humour? Because it doesn't make any sense. Not only doesn't it make sense; he mocks us in opposition and he mocks the public when he says those kinds of things. We know he is out of the housing business. He has not done a thing.

What have we got here? Who likes this proposal? Who out there likes it? David Crombie, a former Tory

who did the Who Does What kind of report, said that he doesn't agree with the downloading of housing.

M^{me} Mulvale, the newest head of AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, just said that what we need to do is talk about not downloading, but uploading. Uploading was going to be the key word of her campaign against this government. I tell you, Mrs Mulvale is a Tory, God bless her little soul. She is a Tory and she said downloading is bad and that she's going to speak about "uploading" as the key word, meaning that you, province, take responsibility for these issues. "Don't download it to us because we don't have the money to support these programs." God bless Mrs Mulvale because she's going to be a powerful voice, and very articulate as well.

The board of trade about six months ago said that downloading is bad. They also said that we have a housing crisis and that the Conservative government has got to do something. Municipalities therefore don't want it because they see this as a big problem. So who is there that wants this? I don't know. That's why I raise these questions with you, good citizens of Ontario. This government says we're giving it to the level of government that is best prepared to deal with housing. The association of municipalities said, "We don't want it." The board of trade said this is dumb. David Crombie in the past has said it's dumb. Tenants don't want it because they're afraid; they say it's dumb. I'm struggling to find, other than these Conservative members, who their allies are and I don't find any. So I'm not sure where their support is for this kind of initiative.

Mr Coburn, the parliamentary assistant, also said that they will keep provincial responsibilities in a number of areas. He said the province will retain these powers: setting and monitoring standards; ensuring current levels of service are maintained; making sure the benefits and eligibility requirements are consistent province-wide. Municipalities must report on a regular basis to ensure that provincial standards are met and that units for the disabled, as he says, have access and that it's maintained. Even though in this regard they haven't introduced the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, I'm not sure how they square their concern for people with disabilities. Yet when we asked them to introduce the Ontarians with Disabilities Act—they're working on it, I guess.

They will maintain responsibility for the mortgage renewals for group insurance, which will go to another, third party, but presumably centrally controlled. The benchmarking is something, of course, they will set by the rules, whatever "benchmarking" means. Benchmarking is likely to mean the lowest common denominator so they can probably cut some dollars away from the providers of housing, pool of replacement reserves and so on.

The province wants to retain these provincial responsibilities and I think it's a good thing. The problem is, they have said to the municipal sector, "We trust you. We think you're the best placed to be able to handle housing." "Don't you trust them?" they often say to me. "Don't you trust them?" If they trusted them, why would

they need these provincial kind of rules? Why would they need these powers of the regulations which we know nothing about—

Mr McMeekin: Be selective.

Mr Marchese: We'll be very selective. You wait and see. But we know nothing about the regulations. They're not debatable. They don't come to the House to debate.

Why is it that if you believe that municipalities ought to have the power and the say, you then saddle them with provincial standards and guidelines, if you trust them? When you have provincial standards, what it means is that you don't really trust the municipalities, do you? You don't trust them. You just want to dump.

If you want to have provincial standards—which, by the way, I support—then why would you hand it down to the municipalities? Why would you do that? If you have the provincial ability to maintain those standards, because there's a need to do that across the province, why would you in the first place dump it down, member from Niagara Falls? Why would you do that? Either you trust them or you don't.

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My argument is that you shouldn't do it. My argument is, keep those provincial standards because they need to be there. Don't create yet another superbureaucracy at the municipal level. You've got governments creating provincial standards. You've got municipalities that will then create municipal standards. You've got providers who have to report to the municipal government. You've got the municipal government that's got to report to the provincial government. Doesn't that sound to you, member from Niagara Falls, like it's a tremendous amount of red tape? On the heels of talking about red tape, we are now dumping through a bill down to the municipal level where the red tape is so intricate that I don't know who's going to be responsible for what. At any moment it could be the city; at any moment it could be the provider; at any moment it could be the province. At any moment the province could come in and say, "Oh, by the way, we're changing the rules because it's in the law."

It's in the law that says, for example, "A transfer order may contain provisions dealing with other matters that cabinet ... considers necessary or advisable in connection with a transfer." It's an absolute power that the province retains for itself to say, "A transfer order may contain provisions dealing with other matters that cabinet ... considers necessary or advisable...." "Advisable"—whatever the government believes is advisable, and all that through regulation. It never has to come to the House for debate because presumably these omnipotent types know what they're doing and they don't have to worry about this at all.

There's a wonderful line that is given to us by Mr Coburn, the parliamentary assistant, who says, "The municipalities will now own and operate \$1.7 billion worth of valuable assets." First of all, if it's such an asset, why would they give it away? Second, if it's such an asset, why would the municipalities so resist it? But to hear the parliamentary assistant say they've got an asset on their

hands, they will now own and operate a valuable asset—again, I could hardly contain myself when I read that, because I wanted to read the Hansard.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Is this containing yourself?

Mr Marchese: You could explode with comedy, with laughter; you could explode with tears. You could do so much. We don't have the time for that because there's so much to say. If it's such an asset, why is it that Peel did a study just a short little while ago that says, "By the way, this valuable asset that you're downloading to us is not such an asset at all"? In fact, they say, "We're going to need \$1.1 billion over the next long period for capital repairs." The parliamentary assistant says it's an asset: "We're giving it to you. Aren't you happy that we give you this? It's \$1.7 billion worth." Peel says, "Hold on a moment; hold on here. We've done a study that says we need \$1.1 billion." That doesn't sound right, but to hear these Tories, they're giving them an asset of \$1.7 billion.

Yesterday the parliamentary assistant referred to two studies that say, "The capital stock of housing we've got is as good as, or in some cases even better than, some other housing." Mr Caplan yesterday quite properly said, "Where are these studies? Show them to us." It's a well-kept secret. They make reference to a study that we don't know anything about. We've asked for years, "Do the study, show us the study, make it public; let's debate it." There's no debate on studies. The parliamentary assistant just makes the statement that the studies have been done and they show the stock is as good as or even better than what the private sector—

Mr McMeekin: They don't know.

Mr Marchese: What do they know? They have to manufacture an idea. They've got to sell it to the good public. They've got to sell it to Ontarians, so they've got to tell them something, and the only thing they can tell you is that what the New Democrats did, and the Liberals before us, is a boondoggle. That's all they can tell you, and if you buy into that, they're good salesmen. What can I say? If you buy into that, the people who need housing will simply have to struggle as best they can. It's survival of the fittest; it's Darwinian. What can you do? Whoever is the stronger animal will win, and the weaker animal will die; it's the nature of things, according to Conservative ideological philosophy.

Oh, but David, it's true. It's Darwinian in the sense that—right?—the strong survive. The rich do well; they buy good houses or good condominiums. The poor? Well, cardboard boxes. If that's what they're entitled to because they don't work hard enough, that's what they're entitled to. That's what I mean by survival of the fittest, the dog-eat-dog kind of world I wanted to mention.

There is a little clause here in this bill, section 59, which exempts the transfers from the Fraudulent Conveyances Act.

Mr McMeekin: I missed that.

Mr Marchese: Are you going to talk about that too, later?

Mr McMeekin: You go ahead.

Mr Marchese: No, but you expand on it, because we'll touch on a few things. It exempts the transfers from the Fraudulent Conveyances Act. By the way, the act voids conveyances of real property and other items where the conveyance was made with the intent to "defeat, hinder, delay or defraud creditors and others." What's this about? What this is about is that the provincial government is very worried that somehow the municipality is going to find itself with some problems and that they're going to take the provincial government to court. So they said, "Let's exempt the transfers from the Fraudulent Conveyances Act just in case the municipalities might come back to us someday and say, 'We're taking you to court. By the way, capital repairs are not what you said they were,' or a number of other areas that may be pertinent to"—

Mr McMeekin: That's why they don't want to tell us.

Mr Marchese: But why would they tell you that? My goodness, why would they tell you that? You have to read this stuff, right? It's technical stuff. Good people of the Metro Toronto Housing Authority who are watching this, try reading this stuff.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Get Tascona to read it to you.

Mr Marchese: Yes, the legal minds. Good people from Metro Housing, please read this stuff. One friend of mine from the co-operative sector said, "It took me seven readings, and I still do not understand it very well." This is a very able person.

Interjection: He's in the business.

Mr Marchese: Yes, he's in the business. He said, "I had to read and reread it several times." Do you think ordinary Ontarians are going to understand this? No, they're not. They're not going to read this; they're not going to follow this. All the Tories are going to sell you is that what we did before was a boondoggle. That's all that matters.

What more is there? My goodness, the bill strips union rights away from the hard-working employees of housing authorities. The government tramples on workers so municipalities won't complain as much about assuming responsibility for the housing. That's why, I believe, they handed it down. "The workers and the unions, yes, were handed down to the municipalities, and what will happen we don't have a clue. Municipalities will have to deal with that." What about grievances? Well, they don't exist any more. That's part of the deal—poor unions, poor workers, but workers, my God, are irrelevant. Unions? My God, they're irrelevant too. "We've got to worry about the bottom line; we've got to worry about profits; we've got to worry about saving money. We can't worry about workers and union rights, my God." Some 33% or 34% of the people are unionized. This government is working its way to having no unions whatsoever. Wouldn't that be idyllic for this Conservative government? Only 33% are organized, a small number of people. Slowly, Mr Stockwell, my good buddy the Minister of Labour, is going to make it so that we will have fewer and fewer unions in the next couple of years. This government will make it happen.

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We need public hearings. We need to make this government accountable. The only way we can make this government accountable is through hearings. That's the only power the public has to disagree with this government. You need to demand public hearings on this bill. You need to demand it from a social point of view, a political point of view, and a human point of view.

The human point of view is that when they download it to the property tax base, municipalities and municipal politicians will be stuck because there's a financial crunch, and they will not take care of the needs of those working people and those working-poor people and those seniors who are in those buildings. They will not worry about them. From that human perspective and social perspective, you've got to worry.

From a political perspective you've got to worry about the fact that this download is irresponsible. It's a giving away of a social obligation and a governmental obligation, of its duties to all of its citizens that it's shutting down, abandoning, passing down to the municipal sector. From a political level it's stupid, it's wrong, because when governments can simply do that on issues of that sort, it means they will not be there to look after your interests. If they can do that with poor people, with seniors, with modest working people who earn only \$30,000 or \$40,000 a year, less or more, they can do it with all of you who are not in those types of rental accommodations or housing accommodations. You ought to worry. You've got to worry about that.

You, it seems to me, in order to become more active citizens, have got to become more active and get out of your houses and get out of your apartments and start organizing in a way that you can shape the politics of this province and not let Harris shape the politics as he deems, as they want. You can do that.

What has happened in these last five years is that the government has had free rein to do what it wants. There have been pockets of resistance and fight-back on a number of issues in a number of places in Ontario, but it's not big enough and it's not hard enough. The only voice we opposition members have is the voice that we provide through these debates, and that certainly isn't enough to sway the 11 million people who are in this province. It's not enough. We need your help. We need you to be politically active. Without you we are useless members of this House. We are. We are powerless. The only power we have is the power that you give us. The only power you have is to be able to tell governments, "We disagree with you," and only by expressing it strongly and visibly will this government have to start listening to you and not to themselves and their own ideology.

We can't abandon those responsibilities as this government is abandoning its own responsibilities when it claims that this is the non-government government. When it claims that this government is getting out of so many areas of concern, you ought to worry about the implications of that. I am profoundly worried. I am

profoundly worried about the direction this government has taken us over the last five years and the direction it's going to take us over the next three.

You had better, good citizens, prepare for an economic downturn that will come. It is inevitable, not because I will it but because it comes every seven to 10 years. When the downturn comes and these Tories have given away 10 billion bucks, five to the corporate sector and five, six, seven billion dollars to high-income individuals, when the downturn comes and we have no more money, where will you be and where will our services be?

The member from Niagara Falls might tell us, "Oh, we have done a great job of making people rich in this place." What they have done is make people rich, but they have left a gap, an unbridgeable gap, between those very wealthy whom they help and the very modest-income people at the bottom. We need you to become more actively involved as a way of dealing with this kind of politics that leaves us all very vulnerable, that leaves less government obligation and more on the shoulders of everybody else to deal with, as if they have the means to be able to deal with it, and many do not.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It gives me great pleasure to rise and respond to the member for Trinity-Spadina. My good friend Vince Quaranta in Niagara Falls, who watches the parliamentary channel quite often, enjoys listening to the member from Trinity-Spadina; he refers to him as the Italian Shakespeare. I have passed that on to the member before and I know he takes that as the compliment that it is. He has a sort of poetic whine when he speaks. It's a very interesting style and it's one that engages a lot of people, but I must get to the content of the member opposite's speech at this time, his very thorough one-hour speech.

He complained about the government of Ontario attaching standards to public housing in Ontario. It's a service that can be delivered not directly by the province but that is a province-wide service, just like for many years, decades, under all stripes of government, hospital services have been delivered by local boards, school boards have overseen the delivery of education, and there have been children's aid societies. These are province-wide services. They have local boards. Municipalities deliver welfare, but it's a province-wide program with provincial standards. All of these things have provincial standards.

The member opposite said, "You're devolving something to the local municipality, but you're attaching standards." Well, of course we would. It would be totally irresponsible not to attach standards to that, just like it would be totally irresponsible for us to let hospitals be run by local boards and children's aid societies to be run by local boards and to not attach standards. It would be irresponsible for us to let daycares be operated without standards. Of course we attach standards to all of those things, just like we're going to attach standards to the delivery of this province-wide service that is public housing.

Mr Curling: I don't know if you noticed the name of this bill. It says, An Act respecting social housing. This government has no respect for social housing, none whatsoever, and they are going to put here An Act respecting social housing.

We could look at it another way too. If it's an act to respect social housing and they have no respect for it, they pass it along to the municipality. When they pass it along to the municipality, they give no authority and they download it there without any sort of funding whatsoever.

This government has never addressed itself to those in need of affordable housing. I think they don't know how, so what they have done is to completely confuse the whole issue. As a matter of fact, we know we shouldn't make mention of the minister, who isn't here, but I would have liked the minister to be here, and I would hope that he is listening too, because maybe we can convince him somehow.

The rent control aspect of it all: they speak with this double tongue, "Oh, we have rent control." These are the same people who voted for rent control, and as soon as they got in, they got rid of it. They have no respect for people who want affordable housing. My colleague from Don Valley East spoke so eloquently about that aspect of it; I hope they were listening. If you look at what they have done to housing, they have destroyed social housing completely. Affordability is not in their words at all. They swore that, "We're going to build in the top end and all our friends who are developers and landlords will then eventually give to the other poor and more deserving." They have not built one unit.

They're embarrassed about it. That's why they're shuffling it off to the municipalities now, and in shuffling it off to the municipalities they are reneging on their responsibility. This government should be ashamed of the things they do in social housing.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I want to rise and compliment my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. I think the passion and the awareness and the detailed understanding of what has been such a complex bill that, quite frankly, does so much damage is a real plus to this place. I might say, just parenthetically, that when my good friend Alvin Curling, from Scarborough-Rouge River, was on his feet saying, "You have no respect for social housing whatsoever," what people can't see in the cameras is a bunch of backbenchers over there all laughing and saying, "Yeah, yeah, you're right. We don't, we don't." The fact of the matter is that they don't care about social housing because, as my colleague from Trinity-Spadina points out, they don't care about the people who would live in it. They're not your people. They don't fit into your Ontario. Your Ontario doesn't have room for people who face the kinds of challenges or misfortunes that those who live in social housing do.

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I think that instead of laughing at what's being said over here, some of you ought to just give it a little thought, because I'm willing to bet that you really

haven't thought through all the implications, not on you or on the politics of back home but on the actual people who live in social housing, who live in co-ops, who live in public housing—call it what you will—the impact on them, because the fact is that you've given this to municipalities, and municipalities can't afford it. It makes no sense.

You talk about a common sense revolution? Where's the common sense in taking housing and giving it to municipalities? That's not why they're there. They don't have the infrastructure. When my colleague talks about all the bureaucracy and conditions, it's because municipalities aren't equipped. But then, as I pointed out at the beginning of my remarks, you don't care anyway.

Mr Wayne Wetlaufer (Kitchener Centre): The member from Trinity-Spadina so eloquently placed his position before us, as he so often does. My wife loves listening to him, watching him on TV. She says, "You know, he speaks as though he really believes in what he says." She says, "That's what's funny," and I said, "No, my dear, what's funny is that he really does believe it."

They talk about no funding. No funding? Under the federal-provincial agreement in 1999, the federal government is going to flow funding to the provincial government for social housing. We are taking that funding and we are turning it, by virtue of this bill right here, right back to the municipalities so that the municipalities will be able to administer the program with no changes to what is going on right now. The program will be run exactly the same.

For the member from Hamilton West to say that the members of the backbench here were laughing, he wasn't even here. He doesn't even know the context. Nobody was laughing.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member from Hamilton West, you'll have to withdraw that comment.

Mr Christopherson: I hope you're going to call on him to withdraw his inaccurate comments. But he is an idiot.

The Acting Speaker: Just withdraw the comment.

Mr Christopherson: I withdraw.

Mr Wetlaufer: I guess when people on TV look at me and say that I was called an idiot, they will consider the source. There is a lot going on here. There is a lot going on.

We are going to monitor compliance of this program with the federal principles for the use of the federal funding. We are going to continue to ensure the federal government is providing mortgage insurance, and we are going to ensure that it is handled properly.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Marchese: I thank my friends and foes. In my last two minutes, I would simply remind the good public of Ontario: you remember the Tenant Protection Act. The landlords genuflect, snorking at the public trough as a result of that one.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I haven't got much time, please.

This act is called An Act respecting social housing. The only benefit accrued to those who live in social housing is the title. It's all they got: the title. Everything else they're getting is a big risk.

I'll tell you this: when there is an economic downturn and we, the province, will be faced with very few bucks, the municipalities will find themselves in a more difficult situation than we will, because they're only relying on property taxes from the tenants and from the house owner and from the business sector, which they don't want to hurt. When that is the case, what do you think is going to suffer? Not just housing, but every other service that is within their own jurisdiction. But social housing will be the worst off, because they will worry about the homeowner before they worry about people living in social housing.

We need hearings. We need the people of Ontario to come to those hearings. We need you to meet with the Tories and ask them what's in that bill. We need you to contact us so that we can help you to better understand this bill and give you the information you need so that you can take greater control of what's happening in this place. Don't let them abandon those essential responsibilities by handing this housing need to the municipal sector, which relies on property taxes for its base. Don't let them do that. It's wrong.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton): I'm very pleased to join in the debate on Bill 128, which simply reads An Act respecting social housing. The proposed legislation sets out mandatory provincial requirements for coordinated access to social housing. I emphasize "coordinated access to social housing" because that is an important part of this legislation, and it's important that people have a transparent and seamless approach to deal with social housing.

Coordinated access helps simplify the applications process for people who need housing assistance. It is an important component of an efficiently run housing system. Under the system proposed, service managers would coordinate access to social housing in their communities to ensure that individuals seeking assistance can get the information they need and can place their names on waiting lists at any access site in their community. Each service manager would be responsible for how applicants are assessed and selected as well as for the administration of financial testing.

The proposed coordinated access system would place applicants on a centralized waiting list according to their choice of provider, projects, locations and needs. The applicants on the waiting list would be ranked according to the process approved by the service manager, taking into account need and the length of time on the list. The housing providers would select the tenants in order from that list. There would be mandatory priority for victims of family violence.

Beyond the provincial requirements, municipalities would have the flexibility to establish local priorities for access as long as these priorities did not conflict with

provincial priorities, with provincial standards for service levels or with the Ontario Human Rights Code. Service managers might choose to integrate coordinated access services with Ontario Works and child care programs or to delegate this role to housing providers or other community organizations. The legislation would also ensure that applicants with special needs would have priority access to special-needs units.

The government is fulfilling its January 1997 local services realignment commitment to transfer responsibility for social housing programs to municipalities. This has three key benefits. First, it puts a local service back into the hands of the local community so that the service can more effectively reflect the local needs. Second, it means that the local community can more effectively integrate this service with other locally delivered social services such as Ontario Works and child care so that clients can be better and more efficiently served. Third, it means that the responsibility for the bricks and mortar will be in the hands of the local government, where it more appropriately belongs.

Tenants in social housing will not lose their homes, and their tenure is secure. The province is proposing to transfer simpler, more streamlined and efficient social housing programs that will be more cost-effective and easier for municipalities to administer.

As of January 1, 1998, municipalities started to pay the cost of social housing programs as part of the local services realignment. In exchange, the province took 50% of the education costs off the residential property tax, which gives municipalities the municipal tax room to meet the cost of new service responsibilities, including social housing costs.

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Since 1997, municipalities have benefited from a \$100-million decline in social housing costs, due in large part to lower mortgage costs. These decisions, if approved by the Legislature, will give municipalities the say for pay they are expecting.

The province is transferring public housing to municipalities, a valuable asset with a gross value worth \$3 billion. The province is proposing to transfer social housing to municipalities in two stages. The public housing portfolio is proposed to be transferred by the end of 2000, and the non-profit portfolio would follow within approximately 18 months of proclamation of the enabling legislation. The province is proposing to provide transition funding to help municipalities with costs of assuming social housing.

The question is, why is the province proposing to transfer social housing to municipalities? Social housing is a service that is best administered at the local level. Local governments are closest to the people they serve and best know the needs of their communities. Transferring social housing to the municipal level would provide the opportunity to integrate some aspects of the program delivery with other social services such as Ontario Works and child care.

Mr Caplan: Why?

Mr Tascona: This, in return, would pave the way for better services for individuals and lower costs for taxpayers.

I hear "why" from the other side, mainly from the Toronto members, who have no understanding of what's going on in the province outside of Toronto.

The proposed legislation restructures governance of the social housing business. Currently, municipalities pay for social housing while the province administers the program. The legislation will provide a new structure to allow service managers to administer social housing.

Social housing has been funded and administrated by both the federal and provincial governments. The transfer will include 84,000 public housing units and 156,000 non-profit and co-operative housing units. In January 1997, the government announced that provincial responsibilities for social housing would be delivered to the municipalities as part of the local services realignment. The province assumed half of the education costs that were raised through the residential property taxes, giving the municipalities tax room and sufficient revenues to take on new services responsibilities, including social housing.

The municipalities have been paying the costs of social housing since January 1, 1998. The province continues to administer the social housing portfolio. The province signed a social housing agreement with the federal government on November 17, 1999. The signing of the agreement allowed the province to proceed with the proposed transfer of social housing administration to the municipal level and to prepare to introduce the necessary legislation for devolution. The new agreement allows the province or municipalities to simplify social housing programs, streamline administrative arrangements and serve clients more effectively. The agreement also transferred some federally administered social housing projects to provincial administration. These federal providers will retain their agreements under municipal administration. The province will receive money from the federal government to meet the financial obligations for housing that the federal government has cost-shared in the past, as well as for housing that it funded unilaterally.

If the Legislature approves legislation this fall, public housing will be transferred to the municipal level on January 1, 2001, and the non-profit housing portfolio will be transferred to the municipal level within approximately 18 months of proclamation of the enabling legislation.

Social housing tenants, as I've said, will not be affected. Their tenure is secure. The municipalities themselves will manage, operate and administer their own social housing portfolios, so it won't be a program that's set up in Toronto to dictate to communities like Barrie how they're going to operate their public housing and how they're going to operate the non-profit housing.

The province will continue to play a key role in setting and monitoring province-wide standards. The provincial standards would ensure: (1) that there is compliance with

the terms of the federal-provincial social housing agreement; (2) that the municipalities will continue to provide assistance to the same number of rent/geared-to-income households as those receiving this assistance at the time of the administration devolution; (3) that there are province-wide rules on eligibility and benefit levels, and geared-to-income rents would continue to be set at 30% of income; (4) that municipalities report on a regular basis to ensure that provincial and federal standards are being met; and (5) that the current supply of units modified for physically disabled access will be maintained.

The roles and responsibilities of non-profit and co-operative housing providers would remain essentially the same. The province proposes to replace a range of different operating agreements for non-profit and co-op providers with one stable, consistent accountability framework that would be set in legislation.

Under the new funding model, non-profit and co-operative housing providers would be given a fixed level of subsidy with which they would be required to operate. Providers would gain more autonomy, funding predictability and streamlined accountability. Roles and responsibilities and agreements of federal providers would remain the same.

Service managers have a key role in this legislation, and the question for the public is that they want to know what the service managers are. Service managers were designated as delivery agents for social services by the government in 1997, as part of local services realignment. The government's aim is to consolidate municipal service management for social and community health services and to streamline and improve service. There are 47 service managers to manage social assistance, also known as Ontario Works, child care and social housing. They include 36 municipalities that have been designated as service managers in southern Ontario. In northern Ontario there are 10 district social services administration boards, and the regional municipality of Sudbury has been designated as a service manager.

As part of this debate, I want to give some facts about public housing in Ontario. There are 84,000 units of public housing owned by the Ontario Housing Corp and operated by local housing authorities. The Ontario Housing Corp is an agency of the government of Ontario and is governed by a board of directors appointed by order in council. The Ontario Housing Corp gives policy direction, manages the budget and funds the local housing authorities. Each local housing authority is an agency of the government of Ontario and is governed by a board of directors appointed by order in council. All public housing units are subsidized for tenants with low or moderate incomes. These tenants pay rent geared to income, also known as RGI. The tenants' household income and assets are assessed, and the rent calculated at 30% of household income.

If the Legislature approves legislation this fall, on January 1, 2001, the government will transfer the entire public housing business to the municipal level. Tenants'

security of tenure and subsidy would not be affected by the transfer. Geared-to-income rents would continue to be set at 30% of income. The proposed legislation restructures governance of the public housing business. The new structure would allow service managers direct control of both the property management business and the properties, with minimal disruption to tenants.

If the proposed legislation is passed, local housing authorities would be dissolved. The properties they manage would be transferred to the local housing corporations, also known as LHCs. The LHCs would manage the properties in much the same way as the local housing authorities do now. The local housing corporations would be formed under the Business Corporations Act. Service managers would be named as the sole shareholder of the local housing corporation. Shares would be issued to each service manager through the legislation and each service manager could transfer some shares to municipalities within its service area.

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Local housing corporations would own the public housing properties. The service managers would fund the local housing corporations by monthly payments based on an annual budget. Current local housing authority board members would become initial board members of the local housing corporation. Service managers could replace or appoint board members to the local housing corporations on an ongoing basis.

Local housing authority staff would be transferred to the local housing corporation with existing terms and conditions of employment. After the transfer, service managers could change the structure and organization of the local housing corporations, including consolidating their administration within a new or existing municipal department.

The Ontario Housing Corp would continue to operate, but in a greatly reduced capacity. It would deal with residual provincial functions such as making payments on debentures.

We've commented already with respect to the service managers, but I think it's important to talk about the funding assistance for social housing. The province signed a social housing agreement with the federal government on November 17, 1999. The social housing agreement transferred the administration and management responsibilities for the federal government housing programs to the province. As part of the agreement with the federal government, the province is receiving an annual transfer of federal funding. This funding amounts to \$525 million in the first year, and this total amount decreases in small annual increments as agreements expire. A portion of the federal funds will be retained by the province to meet its obligations, including its responsibilities for dedicated supportive housing and potentially, depending on the outcome of the consultation, the rural and native housing program.

The province proposes to flow the funds provided by the federal government to the service managers to fund the federal social housing and cost-share programs that

are being transferred to them. The province also proposes to flow one-time funding of \$58 million to deal with the future capital funding pressures related to the federal projects being transferred. Any annual surplus will be distributed proportionately among the service managers. The service managers must use all surplus federal funding for housing purposes, including the new rent supplement program.

Speaking on the transitional funding, service managers may be eligible to access a total of \$5.6 million in one-time transition funding from the province. Funding will be given to service managers to offset some start-up costs such as administrative office set-up, costs of computer equipment or costs of hiring consultants. The province is also providing service managers with one-time funding specifically to assist with costs of property management systems for public housing. Service managers may be eligible to receive funding to help defray costs related to registering the titles to public housing buildings. The distribution of transition funding for each service manager will be determined through consultation with municipal representatives.

The key thing, which I mentioned earlier when I was speaking, is the coordinated access to social housing. Members, all of us, deal with this issue, and something I've been looking for is more coordination in terms of dealing with this. I deal with the South Simcoe and Barrie Housing Authority. We have non-profit housing within the city of Barrie, the town of Innisfil and the town of Bradford-West Gwillimbury. Throughout the riding we're dealing with this.

Applicants for social housing, be it non-profit, co-op and public housing in their communities across the province can, apply for social housing through the co-ordinated access systems. These systems vary across regions of the province from an information-sharing system to a fully operational centrally administered system. Each system must provide three services to applicants: (a) consolidated information about non-profit, co-operative and public housing options in the community; (b) a common application form for all social housing providers participating in the system; and (c) a single assessment of eligibility for social housing with applications forwarded to the selected providers for placement on the waiting list. Each system may provide one or both of the following services: maintenance of the waiting list and selection of residents from applicant waiting lists.

In many communities local housing authorities maintain the coordinated access systems. Financial testing is currently done by housing providers. If the legislation is passed, roles and responsibilities for coordinated access will change.

I'm running short of time. What I'd like to say in closing is that I think this proposed legislation addresses the situation that needs to be addressed with respect to public housing and non-profit housing. It focuses on the special needs of the population that needs this service.

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

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): When it comes to social housing, there are many inequities all over the province. In my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh we have our own inequities in social housing. The Cornwall and Area Housing Authority is surrounded by the counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. If the social housing transfer is successful, the city of Cornwall and the united counties will both be providing significant portions of the operating budget to the housing authority. It would stand to reason that if both the counties and the city are providing funding for the housing authority, they should have equal representation on the board.

At this point there are eight members on the board. In 1998 the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing transferred the provincial positions on the local housing authorities to municipalities. At that time the local consolidated municipal service managers were given the responsibility of nominating candidates.

Recently four positions became available on the housing authority board and the consolidated municipal service manager for the city of Cornwall appointed four members of the Cornwall city council. They have tried to stack the board. The city members are leaving the counties out in the cold.

Since most housing authority appointments are for three years, if the social housing transfer takes place, the united counties will be financially responsible for a portion of the housing authority bill but they will not have equal representation on the board.

It's all right to listen to the people across the way who say this is good for municipalities. It's not. We should have that bill go to committee and look at these situations and get them straightened out because this is not going to go away. It's going to come back to haunt you for many years if you don't do something about it.

Mr Christopherson: I want to comment on the remarks of the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. He certainly lays out—

Mr Tascona: Be nice.

Mr Christopherson: I'm always nice. I'm not always agreeable, but I'm always nice—at least I think so.

Let me say that you lay out a good argument but what's lacking in it is what seems to be lacking in the government as a whole: there's just no heart in it. We aren't talking about some inanimate object here, being bricks and mortar only. We're talking about people's homes, and in many cases people who, without the assistance of a senior level of government that's awash in billions of dollars of surplus, wouldn't have a home.

It was interesting that the member talked about the fact he thought it was better for municipal governments to be operating this because they're closer to the people. You have to admit that's a stretch, when you're the government that ripped responsibility for education out of local control and centralized it in an education czar where you make all the decisions.

It's clear that you've got contrived arguments, that you're doing the best you can—I might point out too, by the way, that with the education changes you made, you

can't even get trustees to run for those offices. How well did you serve local government when you changed the system to the point where nobody wants to be a school trustee any more? I think that's what your goal is with social housing. You hope that if you make it so tough and so complicated and starve it for funding, eventually the province will throw their hands up in the air and say, "Ah, we give up." Well, we aren't going to give up. This is too important.

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Mr Maves: I just want to rise and compliment the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton for his comments. He always has well-thought-out, well-researched comments when he rises to speak in this House.

Applause.

Mr Maves: The members opposite, by their applause, obviously agree with that.

The member made the comment that being administered at a local level is closer to home and it'll work better there. Part of the connection that's being made is that right now welfare is being delivered, and has been for a very long time in the province of Ontario, by municipal delivery agents. Right now, daycare is being delivered by municipal delivery agents. So the case-workers there know what resources are immediately available in their community, they know their clientele. I think what the member was trying to get at was that having that base of knowledge will make that almost a nice triumvirate that can be packaged and utilized better at the local level to have the housing, the daycare and the social assistance all at that level. They can do more and can target it better than some bureaucrat from a provincial level might be able to do. I think that's what the member was getting at.

The members opposite also talk about that municipalities don't want us to complete this devolution. As the member also pointed out, we lifted, uploaded the cost of education on to the province and left billions of dollars of taxes with the local level, and in exchange they were going to look after other services. They've been looking after and paying for these housing services since 1998 but we've continued to administer them. This is just completing that devolution.

Now, if we didn't complete the devolution, they would have a windfall of the costs of the public housing. Would it be returned to the ratepayers in tax breaks? We don't think so. We don't think so, unfortunately. So, we're completing the devolution started in 1997.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): After reading the contents of this bill, I wonder if the members of this government have read this bill. I wonder if they're up to par, really, if they have followed since 1997, since the downloading, what is happening to the municipalities.

In the second paragraph of this communiqué, they're saying the municipalities and taxpayers will have a saving of \$100 million a year. That's impossible. Already it's been paid by the government, and today it's the low-income families who are going to pay the difference and the municipalities are going to absorb the costs.

Just in Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, the costs of this downloading to the municipalities there are going to be over \$4 million. That excluded the management costs, and today, as of January 1, 2001, the municipalities will be responsible for all the administration costs. When I look at the administration costs, it includes the insurance, municipal taxes, legal fees. It's very hard. That used to be covered by this government, but now it will be the municipalities.

I wonder if those people have been talking to the mayors of their own municipalities, because I'm sure not a single municipality in this province is in favour of this transfer. Even though you say they'll have the right to look after the operations, they will have to follow the rules of this government.

It is unfair that from now on the municipalities will be paying the whole costs, which in my own municipalities will be over \$4 million a year.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Tascona: I'm very pleased to be able to comment on the, I would say, thoughtful comments from the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. Certainly there seems to be an issue there between the city and the county, but the member doesn't seem to want to make any reference to the federal government's role in this transfer process.

The same could be said for the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, who seems to forget that since January 1, 1998, the municipalities started to pay for the costs of social housing programs. They were given tremendous flexibility with respect to the province taking over the education.

The member from Hamilton West, in terms of how he presents this—and he's always consistent in how he presents this in terms of our role—I think has missed the point on this one, because the fact is that municipal government is closer to the people. I think he has to acknowledge that. The fact of the matter is that in education, all we did was to set standards for the school boards to satisfy, and there's nothing different here with respect to social housing. There are provincial standards that are going to have to be satisfied by the municipalities in this process.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Don Valley East.

Mr Tascona: The key thing, as the member from Niagara Falls pointed out, is that this is going to be administered at the local level, by people who know the community, and the key is that there is going to be coordinated access to social housing—much simpler—to look after the people in need.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Don Valley East knows that it's out of order to heckle. He knows that it's more out of order to heckle from a seat other than his own.

Further debate? The member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

Applause.

Mr McMeekin: This doesn't count now, Mr Speaker, does it? I just want to say hi to Whitney. Hi, Whit.

Thank you. I feel a bit like that passenger on the Titanic who went up to the captain and said, "You know, Captain, I have something I want to tell you, that I think you ought to know. The food on this ship is really quite bad," and the captain said, "You know, that's just the tip of the iceberg." This is just the tip of the iceberg.

I'm not sure how representative I am of the adult world, but as adults, when we think of sharing our time and our resources and our wealth, we often use words like "charity" and "justice." There's an important distinction between those two words. To put it quite simply, charity's about helping people with their immediate needs, while justice is about changing the conditions of needy people. In medical terms, charity would alleviate symptoms while justice would cure the disease.

This government, on a good day, may know something about charity, but it seems to have very little understanding about justice—as I think the member for Trinity-Spadina was saying earlier, very much unlike some of the predecessor governments. The Frost, Robarts and Davis governments at least had that sense of the common good and wanting to take care of that.

In the press release that made reference to this bill, there was talk about ending the social boondoggle. One of the kids in my neighbourhood asked me what a boondoggle was, and I said there are really two definitions of a boondoggle. Of course, there's the dictionary definition, which I was tempted to go to, but then there's this government's definition. You know what the government's definition of a boondoggle is? That's getting rid of anything that this government continues to fund that actually helps people, and dumping it somewhere else. That's what a boondoggle is.

It's sad. I come from a municipal background, as you know, being the mayor of that great municipality known as the town of Flamborough, the only municipality that actually lowered taxes six years in a row, and you know the reward we got.

Mr Bartolucci: Until the downloading hit.

Mr McMeekin: Until the downloading hit. Well, it just went crazy, Rick, I tell you, and in that role as mayor and regional councillor I had a number of experiences that I want to share.

I happened to chair the region's community service and public health committee. Talk about a form of vicarious trauma, David—you did that job too—as group after group impacted by the downloading came and said, "We just can't provide the kind of service to the vulnerable, to the needy in our community."

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I sat on a group called the MIT group, the ministry and transition group, that was struck after the Minister of Health decided to close the Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital. We had to try to put together how we were going to house those folks. As we know from the wonderful work that Anne Golden has done, about 54% of the homeless in Metro Toronto are people who suffer

from one or another form of mental illness. Those are the kinds of things that we're having to deal with.

I had the opportunity to chair a committee at the district health council which looked at second-level lodging homes and the complete abandonment by this government of the financial supports that were at one point in place to assist there.

A river runs through all of these experiences for me, and the river has a name. The name is Abandonment; the name is Giving Up.

In the riding of Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, we've experienced at first hand what downloading does. We've seen the \$80-million cut in non-conditional grants. We saw the so-called revenue-neutral downloading that ended up costing us \$37 million, and we live every day, as the members for Hamilton West and Hamilton Mountain know, with the arbitrary and very discriminatory business education tax. It costs our community \$35 million every single year.

My colleague our housing critic talks quite knowingly and decidedly about the dump that's taking place now, the \$356 million in costs that are going to be dumped on the backs of municipalities, and over \$1 billion in Ontario. This bill we see tonight isn't a say for pay. It represents the government's view of social housing and the people who live there, and the policy is nay, nay, nay. Sad, sad.

I can recall, Mr Chairman, or Mr Speaker, as I'm sure you can—sorry. The old experience keeps coming out, the Speaker and the Chairman. But Mr Speaker, you remember the Who Does What commission, the Who Does What to Whom commission, where this government went out and hired the very best people they could: Crombie; even our regional chairman, Mr Cooke, brought his considerable expertise to that table. You got the best advice you could before you completely ignored it. Shame.

We've all heard the story, in fact it's a matter of legend now, about how social housing ended up being on the table here tonight. Rumour has it, and I think it's safe, that the cabinet was looking at what service was likely going to skyrocket in cost, given the next downturn in the economy, and the then Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—somebody named Mr Leach, I believe—said, "Why don't we just throw in social housing? That should kind of even it out."

Mrs Bountrogianni: That was Leach.

Mr McMeekin: Yes, that was him, wasn't it? "We'll ignore our responsibilities; we'll just give it away."

There's lots of talk when this sort of thing happens about pay for say, and you give it a fancy name like "the government closest to the people": "We want to send something to the government that's closest to the people." That kind of rhetoric didn't save my town of Flamborough, the only municipality in all of Ontario that actually lowered taxes six years in a row. It didn't save the municipalities of Ancaster and Dundas, and as the members opposite know, in the recent by-election the voters there said in a very clear way that the jig was up.

They understood very fully what this government was doing and how it was shirking its responsibilities.

This government has the gall to talk about municipal report cards. I don't know. The people simply aren't fooled. They know what this is really about. The member for Trinity-Spadina talked about that sense of social Darwinism—and I think he was right on—this survival of the fittest: "We'll download things, we'll create a patchwork quilt of social housing right across the province, and we'll see if the fittest can survive." That might be great for a science class, but it hardly constitutes a decent, socially responsible housing policy in this province.

I want to say to the government that they're heading in the wrong direction. Having said that, I want to make it clear that I'm thankful we live in a province as prosperous as Ontario. I think it's great that the economy is booming. In fact, nobody would have remembered the Good Samaritan if he hadn't had money. But it doesn't make very much sense, from the concept of trying to equitably adjust to the needs of people in the province, if in the midst of that prosperity we can't somehow find the time and the will to look over our shoulders and to spot the vulnerable and respond to the needs there. That's very much what social housing ought to be about, and I think this bill really misses the mark on that as more and more is being shoved down the throats of municipalities.

I've spoken to municipal leaders in the city of Hamilton who say this is going to be the death knell of social housing. With all the downloading that's come, with all the costs there and with all the rhetoric about tax cuts and the pressures that municipalities are under, there's a firm belief that there won't be another unit of social housing built. I think if that happens it will be on this government's head, without a doubt.

The sad thing is that it could work if the senior levels of government—and I would include the federal government; that's fair ball—could ever get their act together. I can remember the days many years ago when Mr Davis was the Premier here, when partnership actually worked, when we talked about limited dividend buildings, when we had the spirit to talk about the possibility maybe even of a national housing allowance, when we talked about rent-to-own and how that lifted up the morale and that sense of potential that people had in community. But those days are certainly gone. We don't see any encouragement any more. We don't see incentives with the private sector.

The minister knows. He's speaking to the home-builders' groups. He knows the private sector isn't delivering the housing that needs to be put in place to meet the needs of 15,000-plus people on waiting lists. It just isn't happening, and it isn't happening for one fundamental reason, which the member for Trinity-Spadina mentioned: there's not a lot of money in social housing.

I'm reminded of something Bobby Kennedy said. He talked about a just society. There were some great Canadians of recent reference who talked about the just society. He said we ought to get involved, if people have

needs, because we love people, but if we can't get involved because we love them, we ought to get involved because it makes good, sound economic sense to avoid the kind of tragedies that all too often befall societies when we're not prepared to respond.

We don't build strong, healthy communities by shamefully and shamelessly abandoning the historic partnerships that previous governments had struggled for years to put in place. I've got to tell you, I think there are members who sat—

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: I know there's a cost to it. There's a cost to everything. But I say to some of the members opposite, do you want to live in a province that's prosperous but has more and more people falling by the wayside?

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It's almost like there's a big wagon train going west to your promised land, wherever that is. Every once in a while you stop along the trail, and do you know why? Because you've got to let off the disabled; you've got to let off the aged; you've got to let off the poor. You want to speed up the journey. You want to get there faster. That's not the kind of trail we on this side of the House want to travel. Lord help municipalities when we go through our next economic downturn.

We ought to be looking today at what kinds of supports this government could put in place and what kinds of creative entrepreneurial partnerships we could put in place, to work together again, to recapture that sense of doing something right for a change. I don't mean "right." You make the movie, *The Right Stuff*, and then you can make another movie, *The Far Right Stuff*. I don't mean the far right stuff; I mean doing the right thing. I think we can recapture that.

Interesting quote: I mentioned in passing the other day that I'd actually had the privilege of doing some studying here and looking at the Comay task force on housing back in 1974. By the way, this was when the provincial government of the day was struggling with where they would go. Here's a quote, if I could just go back to those heady days, from that report which was the preamble to that time when the government of the day actually created the Ministry of Housing.

Here's what was said: "An adequate housing policy must take account of many factors, but two problems stand above all others. One is the problem of production to generate and maintain a level of house building activity adequate for the requirements of a growing population. The other is the problem of distribution, more specifically the problem of ensuring that those in lower income groups" actually "share in the improvement of housing conditions." Those two "problems are related. The more effectively the problem of housing production is resolved, the easier is the problem of distribution. But when housing production falls short of requirements, the housing problem of those in low-income groups becomes even more acute."

Within a couple of months of that being written, the government of the day moved to actually create the

Ministry of Housing, which is going to be a meaningless ministry if it continues to exist at all. There are two basic approaches I would add to that. We have this belief that governments shouldn't be involved at all. Then there are others who say, "Well, maybe we need the partnership approach," which I would argue.

It's clear that the so-called filter-down theory hasn't worked. The minister knows that. He said that. With the shortage in the supply of housing, there is less and less choice for those who need assistance with basic housing. Waiting lists grow and grow. Those who are already residing in public housing often feel locked in, particularly with the removal of rent controls and all those difficulties.

I had to laugh too, like the member from Trinity-Spadina, when I heard the member from the Ottawa riding the other day make reference to tenants being this government's number one concern. There aren't very many tenants in this province, I say with respect, who would buy that.

There you have it. We've got a situation here where the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer and the middle class is falling further and further behind, where the social consequences of not meeting the basic right for housing in this province are so dramatic, where homelessness is growing everywhere, where poverty is increasing dramatically.

In fact, a recent study in the new great city of Hamilton that came up talked about poverty. Do you know that 25% of the women who live in the new city of Hamilton are in the category of poor; 25% of immigrants; 26% of youth 15 to 24; 27% of children 0 to 14; 27% of persons without a secondary school certificate; 32% of our seniors living in poverty; and 32% of persons who are not in the labour force?

I want to conclude with a bit of dramatization about poverty and its impact. To do so, I'd like to read something that was written by some grade 4 and 5 students, actually, out of North Bay. I commend it to members of this House, particularly the members sitting opposite. This is what the kids said poverty was. These are kids from North Bay.

"Poverty is:
 "wishing you could go to McDonald's
 "getting a basket from the Santa fund
 "feeling ashamed
 "when my dad can't get a job
 "not buying books at the book fair
 "not getting to go to birthday parties
 "hearing my mom and dad fight over money
 "not ever getting a pet because it costs too much
 "not being able to go camping
 "not getting a hot dog on hot dog day
 "not getting pizza on pizza day
 "never being about to go to
 Canada's Wonderland
 "not being able to have your friends sleep over

"pretending that you forgot your lunch
 "being afraid to tell your mom that you need gym shoes
 "not having any breakfast sometimes
 "not being able to play hockey
 "sometimes really hard because my mom gets scared and she cries
 "hiding your feet so the teacher won't get cross when you don't have boots
 "not being able to go to Cubs or play soccer
 "not being able to take swimming lessons ...
 "not being able to afford a holiday
 "not having pretty barrettes for your hair
 "not having your own private backyard
 "being teased for the way you are dressed
 "not getting to go on school trips"
 and, are you ready for the final line?
 "wishing you had a" really "nice house" to live in.

I commend that to members of the House, from the kids from North Bay.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Christopherson: It's my pleasure to be the first one to rise after the first speech to the House by the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. Let me just say to him that you really aren't a full-fledged member till you've asked your question, responded at least once and then made your first speech. Welcome to the House formally.

Not only that, I might point out that you did something very, very special, Ted. You not only had the House acknowledge that it was your first speech, with all of us applauding, which is the normal way, and your colleagues stood up—that's the normal way—but you got half the Tory backbenchers to stand up and give you a standing ovation too when you were first getting on your feet. So I compliment you on your achievement on your every first speech.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Don't get used to it.

Mr Christopherson: We have the Minister of Labour heckling across the floor, which he knows is out of order, "Don't get used to it." That's very true too, he having been a minister who got applauded the first time he stood up and never heard it since.

So much of what the member said is so relevant to all this, I'll just pick one item in the few moments I have: the impact on municipalities. Certainly the honourable member knows of what he speaks, given his immediate past history. Having been one of those who was saddled with the burden of wrestling with local budgets in the Hamilton-Wentworth region and in his own home town of Flamborough, he knows the impact of budget cuts and slashing funding to municipalities. The notion that somehow municipalities are equipped, in this Harris era, to adequately respond to the pressures and needs on social housing would be laughable if it weren't so

serious. This is a huge mistake, and I think the member did an excellent job of making that point.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): First of all, I'd certainly like to congratulate the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot on making his maiden speech this evening.

I'd like to just draw attention to some of the more important aspects of this bill. First of all, it is honouring a commitment that we made as a government some time ago, recognizing the fact that devolution allowed for the municipalities to be able to operate in a more efficient way, to be able to ensure that those decisions were being made closer to home.

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It is clear from the benefits that have come from being able to work with the municipalities in areas such as social assistance and child care that these are also part of that whole process, to be able to make sure that communities are able to deliver those programs in the most efficient manner.

This bill sets out a framework for the administration of housing by setting up areas within the province that can operate as service managers for the community. It makes it clear that people need to have this kind of efficiency through the one-stop shop, through the ability to operate in a way that reflects the needs of the individual community. It's really for those reasons that this piece of legislation marks that commitment to continue and facilitate the devolution.

Mr Curling: Let me also commend the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot for an excellent presentation. Ted McMeekin, as you know, is someone who sends a very clear message to Ontario and this government: that they have to listen to what the people are saying. It was rather refreshing to hear him speak, because from the time that he won the seat, I can tell you that the Tories on the other side looked up. Immediately, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing started sending money for a commuting transit problem that they had there. They knew that he came with the authority of thousands of people who were speaking very well and said that you're not listening to them. You haven't heard the last of him. This is just the initial part, the impression upon this House. I know that every time he gets up many in the back room and the spin doctors there are listening very carefully, because they know the influence he had. The bragging that you all went on about in that era, now we have someone who can speak—very much so.

I wanted to touch on one point that he made in his speech. The fact is that it was so moving and is so current. He talked about a young person who said, "I'd like to have a place to call home." You know what? When you look at this bill here, it is for those who can't afford it, who won't be able to call their place home. They have reneged on their responsibility, and this is the point he's making: where is your responsibility; where is your social conscience about those who need a home? It's the base in which we all will survive, and if you renege on those responsibilities, you shall live to see that day. He will be here forever to remind you about that.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): It is indeed an honour to have an opportunity to comment upon the maiden speech of the newest member of this Legislature, the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. In fact, when I was listening to his speech, I thought for just a brief moment that it was a member from this side of the House speaking, because there were moments of clarity that caused me to think that the individual presenting that particular statement sincerely believed that tax cuts were important, sincerely believed and was proud of the fact that there was going to be and had been for the past six years a tax freeze in his municipality. He understood that more taxes didn't necessarily mean a better quality of life.

For that brief moment, and I closed my eyes, I thought for a second it was a member on this side of the Legislature who had that moment of clarity that I was sharing with him. But in fact, he went on and unfortunately engaged in some level of the usual Liberal rhetoric that equates more government and more money with a better quality of life. Of course, there isn't necessarily a relation between one and the other.

I have very limited time, but I want to put this in perspective. I want those in this Legislature, who I know are listening intently, and those watching by way of their television sets to understand that it has been two and a half years that municipalities have been funding social housing within their respective communities. By presenting this legislation, we are giving those municipalities a say for their pay. It is that simple: a say for their pay.

The genesis of this entire process was the Who Does What, as it is euphemistically called, the LSR, which involved the transfer of certain resources and responsibilities between the province and municipalities after considerable negotiations. This is the natural fruition.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot has two minutes to reply.

Mr McMeekin: First of all, I would like to thank all the members who had the courage to applaud my maiden speech. I appreciate the warm reception and some of the ideas.

I want to say to certain members opposite that I don't think there is anything wrong with people making money. I don't think there is anything wrong with government being efficient. You're right, I don't think there is anything wrong with responsible tax cuts that don't gut the services. But the difference between some of the comments emanating from the other side and what I was attempting to say here is that, like St Francis, you need to have the wisdom to know the difference.

I can tell you quite candidly that the downloading in difficult economic times, particularly of those kinds of issues that the Who Does What group visited and said it didn't make any sense to download to municipalities—social housing being the key, and the shifts in the welfare funding. It was very clear. David Crombie said it very well: "The first economic downturn that befalls this

province, municipalities are going to get it in the ear.” We know that, and I suspect, if the truth were known, members opposite know that too, and my fear is that that’s exactly why you’re taking the kinds of policy initiatives you’re taking, you know, dumping. I could do very well if I could get somebody to pick up my mortgage payments, and I suspect that’s exactly what the government on the other side is attempting to do.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I unfortunately didn’t have the opportunity to applaud the maiden speech of the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. I just wanted to say welcome. The previous member of that riding used to sit beside me, so you’re welcome to come and join me any time, Ted.

A number of issues have surfaced in the discussions here among the various members, and a couple of questions that we could talk about. What is the government doing to encourage the development of affordable housing in the future? They’ve taken a number of steps to encourage new supply and improve the climate for investment in rental housing. The rent controls were replaced by the Tenant Protection Act, which encourages investment in rental housing by allowing landlords to set market rents on vacant units. The Ontario building code was amended to encourage the development of single-room occupancies. The PST rebate program provides a grant of \$2,000 per affordable unit that offsets the impact of that provincial sales tax.

The government is actively working to find ways to increase new supply. We’re trying to get other provinces and levels of government onside to deal with the decline of private sector construction of affordable housing and to look at productive ways to encourage the industry to get back into building.

Mr Christopherson: Use your own words.

Mr Spina: Is the province giving municipalities transitional funding, I say to the member from Hamilton? I can tell you that when we were going through the Who Does What exercise three years ago—the uploading, downloading, let’s see who’s working—what happened in the region of Peel and across this province was that the consideration of social housing was on the table. It was on the table with AMO, it was on the table with NOMA, it was on the table with FONOM.

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The reality was, as we went through that process and went through the discussions—and at the time, as I know the previous members recall, I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development. Part of the responsibility with which I was charged was to travel across the north and talk to the municipalities in northern Ontario about the responsibilities that we were proposing they would assume, and also about what assistance they needed to be able to cope with the downloaded services; in addition to that, what services would be adopted by the provincial government in order to be able to mitigate that transition of services. So we went through a number of issues. At the time, to devolve social

housing was an extremely difficult proposition for the municipalities to take, along with the other services. Nobody argued that, that was a given, and we understood the reason for that. It was a difficult situation.

However, they said, “Just give us time to get our head around the changes that are being proposed and then we’d be happy to look at it.” Well, folks, here’s the day. We’re now looking at it, and it’s in consultation with the industry, with the municipalities, with the district social services administration boards, or the DSSABs, as they are known across northern Ontario. But let me tell you what the region of Peel said to us—not just me as the MPP for Brampton North at the time, but also the other MPPs from both Brampton and Mississauga. The region of Peel said to us, “Look, we understand that you want to download the provincial social housing services to us. We operate it as it is now. All you do as a government essentially is set the guidelines and give us the funding in order to make the system work.” Well, devolving it now gave the municipalities the control they really needed in order to best manage the property. Folks, that’s what this bill is all about. We’re devolving the responsibility, the managerial responsibility of these housing units for which the municipality already has the operational responsibility. That’s simply what it is.

Is there transitional funding? Of course, to the tune of about \$5.6 million. Some service managers will be eligible to access up to \$5.6 million in a one-time transition from the province. That can be used to offset start-ups, costs of computer equipment, hiring in consultants and so forth. But the regional municipality of Peel said to myself and the other members from Peel, “Listen, give us the responsibility, but at least give us the tools with which we can manage the process. If you’re going to give it to us, give it all to us and don’t put shackles around our hands. Give us the flexibility to get rid of the units that we want to get rid of and to hold on to the ones we want to hold on to.” What happens then is that, as this bill is now putting forward, the number of units allocated per municipality will remain intact. If the municipality chooses to devolve, to get rid of, to sell off portions of the social housing allocation that they currently have, it must be replaced. They can only do that through permission and under agreement with the ministry.

For example, if a municipality has 50 or 100 units that you want to sell off, for whatever reason, then they must come to the ministry and ask for permission to devolve those units. What happens in response in the ministry is that if they sell off those 100 units they must replace them in one way, shape, form or another. That means that those 100 families or individuals who are particularly involved in that transaction must be taken care of by the social service agency of that municipality, or that DSSAB. If it means putting them into perhaps a co-op housing unit that has space available, or if it means moving them to another housing unit that has been built by the private sector but still maintained for these tenants, or if it means these tenants will be allowed to integrate their lifestyle into a completely private sector

unit—townhouse, apartment, semi, whatever—it allows the tenant to move into private sector housing subsidized through the social service agency by the municipality or the DSSAB. And you know what? Nobody has to know they're subsidized. So it doesn't matter if you're in a 500-unit apartment building and 50 of those tenants in that apartment building happen to be subsidized by the social service agency. That's great. They still have the appropriate housing geared to their income for their ability to live according to their income level.

That's what this whole thing is about. The philosophy that we ran on in 1995 and we continued to run on in 1999 was that the government should not be in the business of subsidizing bricks and mortar. We are in the business of assisting people who truly need assistance to live either in government housing, in social housing, or in geared-to-income, non-profit units, or, frankly, what's wrong with assisting these people to live in a fully private sector unit where the apartment building or the townhouse complex is at full market value but they are receiving assistance from social services in order to live in that environment? I don't think there's anything wrong with that. Frankly, it gets people out of that sort of ghettoizing concept that none of us want. It allows the opportunity for these people to live in a regular neighbourhood like anyone else, and no one has to know they're in a subsidized environment.

Those are the elements that are really key to the devolution of these social housing responsibilities. That's what this is about. That's what we've been trying to do.

Are there transition dollars? Yes, there are transition dollars. Are the proposed standards still going to be there that are there today? Yes, they will remain intact. It would ensure that there's compliance with the terms of the signed federal-provincial social housing agreement. It would ensure that the municipalities will continue to provide assistance to the same number of rent/geared-to-income households as those receiving this assistance at the time of the administrative devolution. The municipalities will report on a regular basis to ensure that provincial and federal standards are being met. There will be fair and consistent eligibility, benefit and access policies right across the province, and the current supply of units modified for physically disabled access will be at least maintained, if not enhanced.

That's what this is about. That's what we are trying to do with this bill.

By the way, I forgot to indicate that I would be sharing my time with the member for Niagara Falls. If that is acceptable to the Speaker, I'd be happy to now devolve my share of the time to my colleague from Niagara Falls, just down the road from Aldershot.

Mr Maves: Thank you to the member for Brampton Centre for kindly allowing me eight and a half minutes to speak to this bill.

Before I begin, I also want to add my congratulations to the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot for his maiden speech in the Legislature. I didn't

hear it in its entirety, but I did hear the bulk of it, and I congratulate him on that. I also congratulate him on his election and being a member of the Legislature.

The member from Brampton did a good job of reminding us all that this is the final leg in the transfer of services that the province did with the municipalities back in 1998.

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The member, when he was parliamentary assistant, went to northern Ontario and spent a lot of time with northern municipalities talking about the transfer of services at that time. Indeed, we had several committees and several different people, including David Crombie and others, doing a lot of work with the municipalities, with AMO at the time, to try to work out this package of uploading the cost of education to the province and letting the municipalities maintain those education revenues raised from property taxes locally to fund other services the province had been paying for.

At one point in time, there was a huge swap proposed with uploading all of the education costs and passing down to the municipalities a much bigger parcel of services to be delivered at that level. The municipalities, after they had done all kinds of negotiations and discussions and had commissions and reports—and by the way, this was all predicated by 24 studies in the post-war era in Ontario that said to get education off the property tax. It's not something that came out of the wild blue yonder. It wasn't just an idea that came from nowhere.

In fact, the NDP's David Cooke, who was the Minister of Municipal Affairs in the early 1990s, looked at this, uploading education and transferring down and letting them keep the education property tax revenues to pay for services. He didn't do it. At the time it was a matter of, I think, political courage. Municipalities have said for years, "We need to shift education up because it's a social service. Give us hard services." Housing is a hard service. It's bricks and mortar. They're going to maintain it. They're going to look after it just like they do local roads, for instance.

The member from Brampton did a good job of reminding us of that. Not only did he do a good job of reminding us that this is the completion of that transfer of services; what we should be reminded of tonight is that initially we had a broader transfer of services, all of education and a bigger basket of services to the municipalities.

What happened was that AMO balked at that and they made a proposal to the government which became the transfer of service. It was actually AMO, at the end of the day, who made a proposal to us. They said: "Look, leave us with 50% of education property taxes. You take the 50% that we're now funding and just give us a smaller basket of services to deliver at this level." That included social housing. That's where we are today.

Since 1998, municipalities, out of those education revenues that they get to keep, are paying for the cost of social housing. I have to remind you that year after

year—because every year we work out the equation of costs that the municipalities are incurring from the transferred services, plus the revenues they're getting from keeping education taxes, whatever the difference is—if there is a difference that's not in their favour, we transfer them dollars to make that up. When we keep an eye on those costs, we see in each region, in each municipality, what the costs are on an annual basis.

The costs for social housing have gone down year after year. They continue to go down. In fact, they've dropped about \$100 million in the past two years. You just can't neglect that. We transfer something that's a saving. The cost has continued to decline. Municipalities are also having huge savings in the decline of people on social assistance. There's a big saving there for municipalities.

This is not something new. This is not something that anyone is not expecting. The municipalities have been paying this for two years. Now they're getting administrative control over it. That's all it is. There are 84,000 units of public housing that are being transferred; 156,000 non-profit and co-op housing units will follow over a period of 18 months.

One of the members opposite did a heartfelt plea that all of these people who are in public housing or in a rent-geared-to-income unit, non-profit unit, co-op unit, are all of a sudden being thrown out into the street, that they're not going to have any place to live. Poppycock. He knows better than that. He shouldn't fearmonger like that, because if there are people sitting at home listening to this debate, they may have the impression that all of a sudden they're going to be moved out of their public housing units. The actual fact is that the eligibility rules remain the same as they are now. All households in need will continue to be eligible to apply for social housing. We're not getting rid of any units; we're not moving anyone out of their homes. They're all going to stay in their existing facilities when we transfer this to them. To try to fearmonger that is absolutely ridiculous.

Another discussion point that has continued to come up tonight from the members opposite is what kind of maintenance has been kept up for the public housing stock. Is it in a state of good repair? We've said that there are two studies, one by the IBI Group called "Ontario Housing Corporation: Analysis of Building Condition Assessments," and it talks about the fact that the housing stock that we're transferring is indeed in very good condition. The ministry is going to make those available. I believe they'll even be available on the ministry Web site in a very short period of time, so members opposite will be able to look at that.

We've been spending hundreds of millions of dollars in improving and keeping up the public housing units. I would argue in some cases that we're probably spending too much money on some of that housing stock. I know that in my region of Niagara, I've had contractors who have bid on contracts to do repairs to the public housing stock come to me and say, "You know what? This doesn't need to be done. This is work that does not need

to be done." But it's being done anyway because of the old bureaucratic language of, "Well, we've got the money. If we don't spend it...." There's been money that has been wasted on this. In my area I've heard that several times.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Come to my riding.

Mr Maves: The member opposite says he's got some problems in his area. Well, I contend that in mine we don't. We've got two studies that have said we don't. So there are going to be continued financial dollars, capital dollars, to maintain that. As I said at the outset, there is \$100 million in savings and lower costs that municipalities are going to be met with because of the cost of this.

By the way, where are the savings coming from? The NDP, when they brought in most of this housing, got stuck with such huge mortgages that were 13%, 14%, 15% higher. As we've been renewing mortgages because they've been coming up, that's where we've incurred a lot of the cost savings over time. Those savings will continue to accrue as more of those old mortgages come due and we can renew them at a lower and lower rate.

As the member from Brampton said, this is the final step in the process of devolution. There has been all kinds of consultation on it—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Lalonde: Once again, the more I listen to the people of the government debating this bill, the less I think they have experience at the municipal council level. Not one municipality would support this bill. I looked at the backlog we have at the present time. If I look at Ottawa, for example, 5,000 to 6,000 people on the waiting list; Toronto, 20,000; if I go to Flamborough, around 1,500; in my riding, about 300. I just want to tell you, as my colleague from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot said a little while ago, don't give up. Continue fighting so that one of these days the government will understand why we are fighting for low-income families and the middle class.

I remember when this government appointed the Who Does What committee. The Who Does What committee was appointed by the Premier so those people could send a message locally as to what Mr Harris wanted. When I say "what they wanted," even though it was against the will of all the people locally, the idea of the Premier has to go through. When I look at the downloading, for example—ambulance, police, roads, assessments, health prevention, farm tax rebates, septic tank approvals—the government passed seven bills last year to try to organize what they have failed in. After talking to different municipalities, all municipalities kept saying, "I don't think this government knows where they are going." At the present time in my own riding the shortfall caused by this downloading is going to be around \$26 million.

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Mr Christopherson: I wish to comment on the remarks of the member for Niagara Falls because, to listen to him, he's one of the few over there who injects a little bit of caring and seems to certainly convey a concern, and I believe it's legitimate.

I've decided to leave you alone, Joe, so you should be thankful for that.

The member should appreciate that a lot of this is based on trust, "Have faith, we'll do the right thing," because much of the dirty work is always in the detail, and in this case the detail is the regulations. Regulations don't happen here. We pass the law, the framework, but regulations happen in cabinet. Cabinet is not an open system. Again, it's not a criticism on the process, but what you're putting there.

For instance, all of the operating agreements with co-ops are going to be cancelled and they'll all be replaced by formulas and a framework in regulation. But we don't know what that's going to be. It's all based on trust. It's all based on, "Don't worry, we'll take care of it," but when we look at the track record of this government over the last five or six years, I can tell you that it does not give a lot of trust that you're going to do the right thing. We're probably more concerned, as was played with earlier, that you're going to do the far right thing, that you're going to be more concerned about dollars than you are about people. You've proven that over and over. Education, health care, social services, the disabled—pick an issue and you have hurt people. Now, in the course of this debate, you want people to believe that somehow magically you're going to be transformed overnight and all of these regulations are going to make everything just wonderful. Well, we don't believe it. Things aren't going to be wonderful. This is not good for municipalities and it's certainly not good for those who need affordable housing.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): I'd like to comment and commend both my colleagues from Brampton Centre and Niagara Falls for their comments on this important bill. But I do want to put in context a couple of the points that I think have been missed in this debate.

First of all, I think it's been lost on this whole debate that this government has very clearly made an indication that it trusts and supports the role of municipalities in developing communities, in determining the housing mixes in their communities and determining the needs. I can tell you, as one who was involved in social housing as the chairman of a housing authority, when we ventured forth to look at building new social housing in our communities, one of the biggest fights we had was with the local aldermen who said, "We don't want this housing in our backyard." The truth of the matter is that one of the major benefits that is going to accrue from this is that municipalities are going to take some ownership for developing and determining the proper mix of access to affordable housing, and not just social housing for those with income needs, but also with senior citizens, who have a right to have access to affordable housing. That is a zoning issue. Really, the province fundamentally trusts municipalities to make responsible decisions.

It's interesting that in the debate tonight a major part of the commentary has come from a former councillor in Hamilton and a former mayor in Flamborough. I can tell

you, I served as a trustee on a school board and they did a terrible job being accountable for the incredible amounts of money we had responsibility for. We are transferring responsibility so that it's accountable to the taxpayers municipally. On social housing, given that the federal government bailed out of it years ago, we're going to ensure that municipalities make those responsible decisions.

Mr McMeekin: I'll be brief. I just want to say to the member for Hamilton West that I think he's absolutely right when he talks about trust. I think Maslow's first stage is trust versus mistrust, that infancy stage where young ones struggle with whether they can let go of their parent's hand. I can say that I can't think of anybody out there with any credibility—AMO doesn't support this. The Who Does What experts didn't support it. I would challenge the members opposite to name a municipality that supports this anywhere in Ontario. I don't know of one.

I think the real fear here is—and let's call it what it is—if social housing is to be a real responsibility, if we're collectively and cumulatively as a society to take our responsibility seriously to provide the most basic right—I'm not sure if members opposite actually believe it's a right, but if for a moment we were to travel down that road—if something is a right, then by definition a right is something that can't be denied to anybody. So in order to meet our responsibility, to respond responsibly, we need again to find creative entrepreneurial ways of partnering: partnering with our federal colleagues, who aren't blameless on this, and with our municipal colleagues, and with the private sector out there, which is screaming to get involved in helping meet this horrendous need but can only do it if they can partner with people. That's all we're calling on this government to do. Don't create a patchwork quilt; partner with us.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Maves: I want to thank all the members opposite for their responses to both my speech and that of the member from Brampton. The member for Hamilton West always makes me the most nervous when he starts off by complimenting me, but I want to thank him for his comments, as well as the Minister of Tourism, who was just in my riding yesterday to announce a \$14-million redevelopment of Roberts Street, which is the gateway to Ontario coming across the Rainbow Bridge and actually coming into Niagara Falls from municipal road 20. He's done a great job for me and for my residents down there and I want to thank him for that and for his comments tonight.

The members opposite say, "Name me a municipality that supports this." Name me a municipality that didn't support and doesn't support removing education from the property tax. Every single mayor all across this province screamed every taxation year. If they didn't do a tax increase at the municipal level but all of a sudden the school board did yet another tax increase, who would get blamed? It was the mayors, time and time again, because people didn't make the connection that it was actually the

school board that raised their taxes. They just said, "It's got to be the mayor's fault because it's coming on my property tax." Everyone in this province agreed, "We've got to do something about education being on the property tax."

Once we take education off the property tax and we start paying for it at the provincial level, we have all of this property tax now that's being collected and left at the municipal level. What do we do with it? We transfer some of the services that we've been delivering down to

that municipal level, because that way they can use those dollars that used to be there for education services. If we didn't transfer any of these services down there, there would be a huge windfall. Would it get returned to the taxpayer? I doubt it. So it's a transfer of services and a transfer of revenues.

The Acting Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2129.

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Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premiers et derniers numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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