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**Official Report
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**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 31 October 2001

Mercredi 31 octobre 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 31 October 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 31 octobre 2001

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MUNICIPAL ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 30, 2001, on the motion for second reading of Bill 111, An Act to revise the Municipal Act and to amend or repeal other Acts in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 111, Loi révisant la Loi sur les municipalités et modifiant ou abrogeant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we don't have a quorum here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker: To remind members, we had just completed the speech of the member from Timmins-James Bay. We are now at the point of questions or comments.

Questions or comments?

The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bisson: I must say, I want to thank all those members who participated in responding to my speech, all zero of you. It was most intriguing.

I'm only going to repeat very quickly what I said last night in my comment on this, the Municipal Act. I want to make it clear to the government that, again, we in the New Democratic caucus believe that there needs to be reform to the Municipal Act. We in the New Democratic caucus believe that this is a step in the right direction. However, along with our critic Mr Prue, the member from Beaches-East York, we believe that this bill should not go to committee this fall. This bill should actually be ordered to committee in the intersession between the House rising in December and coming back in March or May or April, whenever that might be, depending on the leadership race.

The reason for that is that this is a huge bill. Just to give you an idea, these are just the explanatory notes of the bill itself, and, on top of that, the bill itself is one of the thickest bills we've dealt with in a long time. It's

some 400 pages and some 485 sections. There already appear to be some difficulties with this bill. I have to believe that the government is going to do what it says it wants to do with this bill, but when you read the bill, quite frankly, there are a lot of difficulties with it.

For example, one of the first difficulties is under section 40. The government is giving municipalities—get a load of this—the right to be able to levy tolls on highways in municipalities across Ontario. As a New Democrat, I don't believe we should be giving municipalities that power. What's interesting is that when you read the bill, what the government giveth, the government taketh away again by ministerial power. So the government is saying, "We're going to give the municipalities powers," but in the end it's the minister who really holds the power.

Another section of this bill does not repeal the provisions of municipal restructuring under Bill 26. The government can still restructure communities across the province. I would think that if we're serious about giving our municipal partners the kinds of powers they need, in the end, they would not have gone this way because this means that Mike Harris, or whoever his successor is, is still going to be able to restructure.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'm really pleased to be able to speak on this bill. This is probably the thickest bill that I've had the opportunity to speak about, Bill 111. Just a phenomenal amount of work has gone into this bill, some 320 pages. I believe the old act, along with all the attachments, was somewhere over 1,000 pages, so it's being reduced significantly.

First I would like to compliment the present minister, Minister Hodgson, but also the previous ministers who have worked very, very hard on this. I'm thinking in terms of Al Leach, Steve Gilchrist and Tony Clement, who all contributed tremendously to the development of this act over the last six and a half years; and also the parliamentary assistants who have worked on this from Morley Kells to Brian Coburn to Ernie Hardeman. Ernie Hardeman put in some four years, along with Al Leach, in developing this particular bill.

The municipalities and a lot of our municipal politicians have been asking for some time to be more autonomous. Of course, we worked on Who Does What. Previous governments called it disentanglement, and it didn't go anywhere there. Certainly, with our efforts back in 1995, 1996 and 1997, a tremendous amount of autonomy and direction was given to municipalities. Municipalities

have also been asking for people powers, which is part of what's in this new bill. Also, they've been looking for a lot of flexibility, and that's certainly contained in its over 300 pages.

1850

This evening, I really wanted to zero-in on the extensive consultations that have been carried out on this particular bill, Bill 111, which will replace the Municipal Act, and the tremendous number of amendments as well. It's the first time it has been overhauled in a century or so; a tremendous length of time that has just been added to and added to, and now we're going to have a whole new act that's more streamlined. It will be a lot easier for municipal politicians to work with, and as well, when there are legal implications, for the legal profession to be able to review and understand what's in here.

The consultation that has been carried out on this particular bill has been extensive. It's also emblematic of this government and the kind of consultations we carry out with all the bills we bring forward and all the decisions made by our government. As a matter of fact, a hallmark of our government has been the extensive consultation that's carried out. This is just one example. I suppose you might say a fair criticism could be that it took so long to bring it in. But good consultation just doesn't happen overnight. That's what has been happening with this one.

As we look at the kind of consultation that has occurred, first back in 1995, there was a commitment made that, yes, we would come in with a new bill and that we would consult extensively with our municipal people, as well as with the business stakeholders. At that time, an advisory group was established under the parliamentary assistant, Ernie Hardeman, which was comprised essentially of municipal stakeholders. Following a year and a half to two years of work, a discussion paper was prepared. That discussion paper was released back in March 1997, which was a logical way to go about it so the public would have some idea as to where the government was coming from and what was going on with the particular direction.

One of the things they were being told as a result of this discussion paper was that the stakeholders would really like to see a draft act, an entire act put out in front of them, the type of act the government would be thinking about—sort of like a white paper, only in the form of an act—and how it would actually be introduced into the Legislature. That's exactly what they did. They responded to the concerns expressed by stakeholders at that time. A draft piece of legislation was then brought forward in February 1998.

There was some hope back in our first term, prior to the election in the spring of 1999 that, in fact, this bill would come in. I remember talking with some of the municipal people in our area and they just felt, "Hey, this hasn't been worked quite far enough yet," in spite of the fact that they were almost at the three-year point when the draft piece of legislation was brought forward.

It was then looked at in two different phases. The first phase was a three-month public consultation. I think it's interesting how far this was sent out. It was sent out not just to all the municipalities—what would there have been at that time, 600 or 700? As you know, we moved it down from 800 to more in the neighbourhood of 400. It was sent out to 130 First Nations and more than 70 stakeholder organizations. Of course, these organizations included municipal associations and professional and business groups.

This full draft act was also posted on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Web site. Of course, this gave the public a much broader opportunity to see it. They wouldn't have to go and get a copy that's nearly this thick. They could get it off the Web site or just print off the few pages specific to them. This has become a tremendous tool to get information out, such as these bills, without having to print a whole lot of bills on paper.

This then moved to some five expert panels organized to review selected portions of the draft act. The membership of the panels included CAOs, clerks, treasurers, engineers and solicitors. These panels discussed everything from technical and implementation issues relating to practices and procedures to waste management, roads, transportation and public utilities. You can see this was very thorough, and this is after extensive consultation had taken place already, but this was working on an actual piece of draft legislation.

This was slightly different from some of the other approaches we've taken, such as for car insurance or nutrient management, where we actually used that for first reading and went out for extensive all-party consultation. In this case, they had draft legislation and worked on it at that point.

As a result of all this, some 320 submissions came in to the government from some of these various major client associations such as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario.

Then it moved into the second phase, working with this draft legislation, and that was with the various stakeholders. At this time the parliamentary assistant, Ernie Hardeman, had some 13 meetings with 20 stakeholder groups that represented the municipal sector and the business community. I think the municipal sector was quite complete, because it included representatives of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, the large urban mayors and chairs of Ontario, the GTA mayors and regional chairs and the Municipal Finance Officers' Association, just to name a few. Those were some of the key ones that were very involved.

Then of course there were the business organizations that attended the meetings, like the Urban Development Institute, the Metro Board of Trade, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Home Builders' Association and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Also involved in some of these 13 meetings with the 20 stakeholders was the business community, which

included the coalition of industries concerned with the impact of the new Municipal Act as well as other organizations. This coalition was comprised of organizations like the Ontario Automobile Dealers Association, the Ontario Hotel and Motel Association, the Ontario Accommodation Association, the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors and the Retail Council of Canada, again just to name a few.

Not surprisingly, from those consultations some concerns were identified and raised by the municipalities as well as the business community. You can imagine, when you're working with a bill this thick and with this many pages, that it's not surprising that some concerns will arise, and considerable discussion took place to try to resolve some of those.

Generally, the municipal sector believed the proposed act was too prescriptive and limiting, while the business sector was more concerned about the potential for increased user fees and increased regulation on the part of municipal government implied by the broader authority proposed. As a result of this, the government made the decision to delay introducing this new act until it could work on developing a new approach.

In March 2000, the present Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Brian Coburn, who at that time was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, started meeting informally with municipal and business sector representatives from right across this province to try to resolve some of these concerns and differences. Following that, in August 2000, the former minister, Tony Clement, committed to a last round of consultations on a new Municipal Act designed to resolve some of these key outstanding issues. Here was another minister very committed to getting this act through and revising this very old Municipal Act that we had in the province of Ontario and getting it updated to the 21st century. During this round of consultation, the minister and ministry staff met with many municipal and business representatives. Last winter, the Honourable Chris Hodgson became the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and he has guided the process through the final stages of consultation and negotiation.

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We're now into areas of agreement. Does everybody agree with the bill? Well, not everybody figures it's exactly perfect, but then that's part of the democratic process. But we've got it very close, and our government is committed to developing a consensus over time. Through these extensive consultations, we believe we've found areas of agreement between the municipal and the business communities on key concerns. Technical working groups were established to study some of the key issues, such as licensing, user fees, corporations, and debt and investment. These groups included many municipal and business representatives. With the four ministers and three parliamentary assistants who have diligently worked on this particular bill, I think we've arrived at the

point where there's significant agreement in the province of Ontario.

I'd like to share with you some quotes I've come across. There are three or four quotes here from Ann Mulvale, president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. This was in their press release on October 18, 2001, not all that long ago, only 13 days ago. She states, "We believe that the legislation will go a long way to recognizing the importance of the municipal order of government, the wisdom of government-to-government discussions." She goes on to state, "We believe Minister Hodgson has seen the benefits of an open, consultative process in the development of this new legislation and we are extremely pleased the minister is going to continue that consultative involvement in the preparation of the regulations to implement parts of the new act."

She goes on to state, Mr Speaker, and I'm sure you'll be interested in this, "We believe this legislation will improve provincial-municipal relations. We serve a common taxpayer." Our government has said that many times. "It does not make sense to them that legislation clouds responsibility and accountability. This act should go a long way in clearly setting out how we handle shared provincial-municipal interests and providing the autonomy necessary to deal with entirely municipal community interest." In my opening comment, I was mentioning how municipalities wanted to be more autonomous, and here it's part of her quote. Also from her, in the Thunder Bay Chronicle: "For the municipal order of government, this is truly a historic day."

I think it's interesting to note the news release from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Ron McNeill, their first vice-chair: "Ontario business had been concerned that the new Municipal Act would give municipalities the greater access to user fee and licensing fees as a source of revenue. However, the new act strikes a balance on these issues.

"The new legislation also ensures that there will be greater transparency and public input when user fees are being contemplated. This is an important step to ensuring the accountability of municipalities when new user fees are imposed." This is from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, an organization recognizing business.

From Jim Simons of the Thunder Bay police department, in the Thunder Bay Chronicle: "I think (the proposed act) is better for the community. It allows the community better control of what kinds of businesses they have, who is in them and what they do in them."

Mr Speaker, I know you'll be interested in this next one. It comes from the very famous mayor of Mississauga, Hazel McCallion; she's quite outspoken, as you know. She states, "Now municipalities have greater flexibility to make decisions regarding services directly relating to them with more latitude and self-determination than before." This flexibility was one of the other comments I had in my introductory remarks.

From the city of Kawartha Lakes—that's in the riding of the present Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—Art Truax in the Lindsay Daily Post: "It definitely

gives the city more flexibility than it formerly had.” Flexibility again there, Mr Speaker. It goes on to say, “It gives the city more opportunity to enter into agreements, on a more independent level, without having to seek approval through the province.” He also states, “A new act will tell us what we can’t do, which is more helpful as it’s not open to interpretation.” He’s recognizing that it’s clear and understandable and transparent, which is so important.

Norfolk Mayor Rita Kalmbach, in the *Simcoe Reformer*, states, “The cornerstone of this is to improve the relationship between the province and its municipalities. Anything that’s going to streamline us at the local level and give us more power, I see as a good thing.”

We might move on to the *Hamilton Spectator* and a comment in there on October 22: “An enlightened, albeit long overdue move, the blueprint introduced by municipal affairs minister Chris Hodgson deserves applause. It is a major step forward in treating municipalities more as partners with the senior governments than as problem children who are supervised at every turn.”

Then the *Liberal Toronto Star* on October 22 is saying, “The new bill brings the legislation governing Ontario’s municipalities into the 21st century,” recognizing its importance after 100 years, that changing this is overdue.

A last quote I’ll share with you, coming from an editorial in the *Lindsay Daily Post*, October 22, under the heading “Municipal Act Changes Overdue”: “Even those who do not agree with the changes have to respect the government for listening to municipal leaders and making an effort.”

It makes reference to changes being overdue, and others in here are saying, “albeit long overdue” move. I think that’s a fair criticism. However, in saying that, you have to recognize how long it takes to go out and consult and get a consensus. This has been approximately six and a half years to arrive at that, but I think we’ve arrived at a bill, Bill 111, that our government can be very proud of. I look forward to its speedy passage, that it will be through this Legislature before we adjourn on, hopefully, December 13, if the House leader and the whip see fit to have that happen.

One other item: I’d just like to mention how it clarifies single-tier and two-tier governments and their relationship to each other, and those have certainly been some difficulties that I have noticed with municipal councils in the past. So again, I think this is just a tremendous bill. I look forward to its passage, and I know municipal councillors in my riding of Northumberland look forward to this new bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I wonder what M. Leach would say about the downloading of housing to the municipal sector. I wonder what the member for Northumberland has to say about what it means to download housing as a responsibility to the municipal sector that now has to raise money from property taxes alone, nothing else. That’s a burden the property owners have to bear and a burden the tenants

have to bear as well, because as you know, member for Northumberland, tenants pay taxes as well; they may be hidden and not as obvious, but they pay taxes as well. This burden is on the shoulders of the taxpayer alone. The city has very little access to other sources of raising money, as you know.

You talked about user fees, and yes, they’ve had to resort to user fees to be able to pay for some of the problems that you have downloaded, and even with that, they’re broke. You have downloaded a housing responsibility that property taxpayers ought not to be paying for. That responsibility belongs to the provincial sector, and money should be raised from the income taxes that you obviously levy on individuals and corporations to the extent that you do. That’s a fairer system to be able to pay for that housing responsibility.

Member for Northumberland, maybe you might tell me or point to a section of the bill that deals with this issue of the download, that responds to property taxpayers who are saying, “We are paying so much in taxes that we can’t afford it any more. We’re senior citizens who don’t have the means to pay for this and we can’t pay any more.” Can you speak to the property taxpayers about that?

1910

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): To listen to the member who just presented, you’d think that this bill really did something of some substance where municipalities are concerned, that it actually responded to a concern that has been raised over the last five or six years that the provincial government is forever imposing new responsibilities, changing the way the relationship operates between the province and municipalities, and gives them the resources they need to deal with some of those changes.

I have to say to you here this evening that in fact this bill does nothing of the like. It does not prevent downloading, nor does it prevent the unilateral restructuring of municipalities. So the power is still with the province. Where municipalities that rightfully, given the responsibilities they now have, were asking for more power, more control, more say in things that affect them in the running of their affairs and were hoping the government would deliver, with this bill, some of that kind of approval, alas, it’s not there. No matter how the member cuts it here or presents it, this is a very small step in a much-needed revamping of the Municipal Act to give municipalities the kind of power they require in today’s world, with the evolution of power and the responsibility that municipalities are taking on more and more and being asked to take on by senior levels of government.

If I were to be more cynical, this presents as another attempt by this government to do a smoke-and-mirrors act and download more of the cost on municipalities.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I’d just like to comment on the member for Northumberland’s wonderful dissertation on how this bill is going to revolutionize and at least give the tools to operate to municipalities that are struggling. Municipalities struggle with their ability to

balance various aspects of the things they have to measure, the things they have to manage. Those things are not always clearly defined between what the province is responsible for and what the municipalities are responsible for. This bill brings into some clarity just how those responsibilities vary, from provincial responsibilities to municipal responsibilities, and the member pointed that out very well.

He also spent some time quoting from people who had made comment on this bill, giving their support to it. I believe he used a quote from Thunder Bay. If he didn't, I will later. I think he quoted from perhaps the most famous mayor in Ontario, Mayor Hazel McCallion, and I will probably do the same thing later. What else did you use out of my speech? There were a number of different things, but he was a great speaker and he did a marvellous job of it. Unfortunately, he took most of what I wanted to say, but we'll forgive him for that tonight. You may have the opportunity to hear his speech again. That wouldn't do any harm, because I think good news can't be said often enough. So I congratulate the member and thank him for taking the time to inform us tonight in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Response, the member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I just can't begin to express my appreciation of the insight that the member from Halton had in the 20-minute speech I gave earlier. I really appreciate his comments. However, the members from Sault Ste Marie and Trinity-Spadina didn't seem to quite understand my comments in the same detail.

When they were the government, from 1990-95, they had an opportunity to do something about this particular act and didn't. They started talking about disentanglement. They talked a lot and then didn't do anything. We're a government that came in and looked at this. We may have used a different name. We didn't say "disentanglement." We called it Who Does What. But we ended up doing something. We've worked on a new bill for six and a half years and now we're doing something. We're actually going to implement it.

It's interesting that the member from Trinity-Spadina kept talking about this transfer of responsibility. He'd like to use a more derogatory word than that, but it's really about transfer of responsibility. He forgot to mention the 50% of the tax base left for municipalities on residential taxes. The government now pays 50% of the education tax that used to be on residences. I'm surprised because he knows about it and he missed mentioning it. I know it's just a slip; he would have normally.

We've had two cuts in the amount on the residential tax since that time, and the millions and millions in savings on taxation across this province on property tax is absolutely phenomenal. Instead of spiralling up, the way it did from 1985 to 1995, we finally put a stop to it, and it's starting to drop.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to say some things

about Bill 111, the new Municipal Act introduced the other day by our friend the member from Haliburton, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The bill gives us an opportunity to reflect on some of the issues around not just local government but the financing of local government.

I must say that in Ontario we have had over a long period of time quite a positive and healthy tradition of local government, better sometimes I think than we imagine. I look at other jurisdictions, some of them not very far from here, and I think a fair-minded person would have to conclude that, by and large, over a long period of time, Ontario has been quite well served by its tradition of local government.

Having said that, I know you, Mr Speaker, as someone who now has lived in northern Ontario for some time will, like the rest of us, have some memory of some very colourful characters who headed local councils. I see my friend from Walkerville is here, as is his colleague from Windsor-Sandwich. It's not that many years ago that we had both at the mayor's chair in Windsor and as a member of the Liberal caucus a very colourful head of Windsor council, and he reminds me of many of those characters who headed local government, enough to say that there was a lot of colour during some of those years, as there is today.

I am also the first person to agree that you can't live just on tradition. We are a very different society in 2001 than we were as recently as the mid-1950s or 1960s. Roughly 40% of the population of Ontario lives within 30 miles of where I am now standing, and that's a trend that is going to have to be reflected in our local government structures.

I wanted tonight to say some things more specifically about two or three items relating to the content of Bill 111. Part V of this particular legislation concerns the whole question of municipal restructuring. The minister and his colleagues in government ask us as a Legislature to approve new ways of allowing municipalities to restructure themselves.

I must say that it's timely for this Legislature to have perhaps a reflective debate about some recent experiences in terms of local government reform. When I heard Mr Harris the other day reflect on his six and a half years as leader of the Ontario government, one of the things he observed, and I think quite fairly so, is that there have been significant if not dramatic changes at the local government level, both municipal and school board.

1920

I was struck by a couple of things, and I would recommend to my colleagues a report issued in March of this year by the C.D. Howe Institute, which concerns itself with local government reform. I want to say before I touch on this subject that I am certainly very sensitive, as a member from a large small-town, small-city rural slice of eastern Ontario, that there certainly had to be restructuring of one kind or another. It always struck me that whether it was a Liberal, Conservative or New Democratic provincial government, there was a frus-

tration here at the centre with some of the practices and some of the organizations that had been constructed at the local level and how they required action by Queen's Park.

Just speaking from my vantage point out in rural eastern Ontario, a number of things that the Queen's Park gang most bitterly complained about were often the result of funding formulae that we were almost entirely responsible for. So in many cases, if local governments were duplicating activities, for example, in the roads maintenance area, it could often be pointed out that it was only because they were taking advantage of poorly designed provincial funding criteria.

I have felt for some time, and I have said to my colleagues in caucus over the last number of years, I would be very reluctant to get involved in significant top-down municipal restructuring, because I find that that is often the least successful. In fact, that is the conclusion of the C.D. Howe Institute in their report. Let me just read a couple of paragraphs from their report released, as I say, in March of this past year.

"Amalgamations forced on municipalities by provincial governments are the product of flawed 19th century thinking and a bureaucratic urge for centralized control," says the C.D. Howe Institute commentary published today.

"What's more, says this study, smaller and more flexible jurisdictions can often deliver services to residents at lower cost, throwing in doubt the financial assumptions typically used to defend amalgamations.

"The new study published today by the C.D. Howe Institute entitled *Local Government Amalgamations: Discredited 19th Century Ideals Alive in the 21st* argues that some provincial governments have been guided by an intellectual fashion of the 19th century, an apparently unshakeable belief in monolithic organizations and central control."

The study's author, Professor Robert Bish, professor emeritus at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, goes on to explain what he calls the flawed thinking of this top-down centralized municipal restructuring.

I have been looking in my area now, after the last two or three years, at some of the results of the latest round in municipal reorganization. Some of it has obviously gone better than others, but as a general rule I think I see evidence, not just in my part of the province but in much of the rest of the domain that we know as Ontario, to vindicate a lot of Professor Bish's observation.

I don't know whether any members of the Legislature have ever read it, but there was a wonderful little essay published in 1983 by the department of political science at the University of Western Ontario entitled *Restructuring Oxford County*. I'm not going to go into all of the details, but in the 1970s there was a big raft of, again, municipal restructuring, and 10 years after the last of those municipal reorganizations was completed, Beecroft at the University of Western Ontario went out to see what he could find as an example of a success story. He decided that Oxford county, restructured in 1974, was a

pretty good example. I'm not going to bore you with the details of that tonight, but the core message in the Beecroft analysis was that it was a restructuring that was led almost start to finish by local political leadership. There's some wonderful stuff in that article about the role played by the then MPP for Oxford, a former colleague, Dr Harry Parrott, some wonderful stuff indicating the ingredients of successful municipal reorganization.

I see the Minister of Education is here tonight. She's a very busy person. Actually, there are two of them across from me. In the last number of years, we have had a number of school board reorganizations, the frustrations of which I can well imagine. But I've got to tell you, in southeastern Ontario we've got a couple of creations that leave local government virtually a nullity, and it's seen to be such by people; creations that are almost imperial in scope and without any real local connection.

It will be for this Legislature and, I suspect, the next Legislature to deal with the fallout of the municipal restructuring that has occurred under the Harris government. I guess it was the member from Trinity-Spadina in his comment a while ago who quite properly drew our attention to the responsibilities local governments have now been given.

Bill 111 talks about things in general, and there are some good things in this bill. A number of private members' initiatives are incorporated, including one by my colleague and friend Ms Papatello from Windsor. But as in most matters before the Legislature today, all the real meat is in the regulations, and they will be written by other people at a different point. But I say to my friend from Lambton and others, how can we seriously and thoughtfully talk about a Municipal Act without coming to terms with the realities today of what we expect the local property tax to shoulder?

It was not without interest that I read Mike Harris's address to the Brampton Board of Trade, a speech given on September 27. In that speech, colleagues will remember, Premier Harris basically announced a major retreat from an initiative of three or four years ago; namely, that the province was going to take back responsibility for GO Transit. I give the Premier credit. This was an admission that that download to large suburban municipalities in the GTA was wrong-headed, however well intentioned.

Let me say to Mr Harris and his colleagues in government that I have municipalities in the Ottawa Valley with very fragile tax bases that have been given the responsibility—let me take a couple of examples. We were given 250 kilometres of provincial highway and something like 60 bridges or bridge-like structures, and a one-time cash payment from the province of something like seven or eight million bucks to help digest that pill.

My county has roughly 100,000 people. It has over 3,000 square miles. Forty per cent of the land base in the county of Renfrew is owned by the crown. I've got municipalities like greater Madawaska and Bonnechere Valley, Brudenell, Lyndoch, Raglan, where 50%, 60%, 70% of the land base is owned by Her Majesty in the

right of the province of Ontario. Those municipalities have been given responsibility for roads and bridges, which they never had before. They are now responsible for social housing. They are responsible for a number of soft services that are very expensive and require a much stronger municipal tax base than many of those lower-tier or upper-tier municipalities in my part of the province have or could ever hope to have.

The Minister of Natural Resources is not very far from me as I speak. One of the questions that property taxpayers in the Ottawa Valley would want me to ask the Minister of Natural Resources or the Minister of Finance for Ontario is simply this: how is it that you basically get a pass, an exemption, from paying your fair share of property taxes on the vast land holdings you have in our county? I must say to the Minister of Natural Resources that while he may be an absentee owner, he's a very active developer on his lands.

Among the things many of the rural municipalities are now expected to pay for are increased police protection, fire protection, and increased road and highway maintenance. If you were travelling between the village of Kaladar in Lennox and Addington and the village of Eganville in Renfrew, you'd come up Highway 41. You'd travel over 100 kilometres. Most of that drive would take you through a provincially owned woodlot, and the vehicles you're going to see are ones that are working Her Majesty's woodlot.

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John Snobelen Inc, on our behalf, is a very busy developer on those lands in south Renfrew, in north Addington, in east Haliburton and in north Hastings. I say to the minister and to the provincial government, what kind of contribution are you going to make to those local governments which now have to pay the bill for things like 250 more kilometres of formerly provincial highways and have to pay for police and fire protection, often on Her Majesty's lands? Those are real questions, and they cut to the quick of municipal finance in an area like mine.

We have land ambulances in the upper Ottawa Valley that are bringing people out of Algonquin Provincial Park, where on a summer weekend you'll find 40,000 or 50,000 people. What is Algonquin Park but a provincial municipality? On a summer weekend, there are as many people in that municipality as there are in the city of Chatham. Well, there's just a breezy indifference on the part of the provincial government to those activities as they relate to local government.

So for me, it's all well and good to have a new Municipal Act, but speaking for the rural and small municipalities in my constituency, they want to know, Mr Premier, now that you have admitted that your download of GO Transit to the municipalities in the greater Toronto area was a mistake, when are you prepared to take a second look at what you've dumped on to the backs of small rural municipalities in the Ottawa Valley and in northern Ontario?

Yes, it is true, as government members will point out, we've greased the skids through a transitional period with transitional money. It would be very interesting to get an honest audit, a complete audit, of what's actually happened. We'll probably never get that. Only an aggressive, muscular, serious Legislature would ever ask for it and only a co-operative government would ever provide it. I don't expect we'll meet either of those requirements in my lifetime.

I say to the government that in my communities, they want an answer. When is the provincial government going to pay their share of the property tax bill that is properly theirs as the owner of roughly 40% of the land base in Renfrew county? When is the Ontario government going to reconsider some of the very costly, expensive programs that have been transferred down to local government? Yes, I heard the previous speaker say that there was a trade. But as people like the former mayor of Petrolia will know, when you give a small municipality something like social housing, when you give small rural municipalities large amounts of what had been provincial highways and costly bridges—we've got a bridge, formerly provincially owned, in an area of my community, and the bill is going to be somewhere between \$1 million and \$1.5 million just to renovate one bridge. We were given 60 bridge and bridge-like structures just a few years ago. There is simply no financial capacity in an area like mine to shoulder the load that's been transferred to it.

I have to say that thoughtful people inside the Ontario government know this, and I expect that reluctantly, over the course of the next few years, ministers and deputy ministers are going to trot out driblets and drabs to try to ameliorate and mitigate what will be a critical situation for a number of these smaller municipalities.

Let me just conclude my comments tonight by making one final observation. My colleague Jean-Marc Lalonde, the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, this afternoon asked the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs a question about when, if ever, rural municipalities are going to hear some news about the so-called OSTAR program. There are lots of glowing words, and I've heard them here for many years, and to be fair, I've heard them from more than one party in government. But I'll tell you, when I think about the way the province often treats municipalities and the crap that we have doled out over the last six to 12 months to municipalities which are waiting for some kind of word about their capital requests—as the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell said today, I've got in my county several municipalities with very serious water and sewer issues. They know they've got to make changes. They know the province is imposing costly new standards upon them. These municipalities played the game by the rules written across the way. They were told to get their submissions in almost a year ago. They have been treated like mushrooms: kept in the dark and fed manure. Well, they're fed up, and I don't blame them.

I see some frowns across the way. No self-respecting person should take that kind of treatment, and I don't care who's in government. One of the problems we're going to have and that we have been having at the local government level is that a lot of people are just not interested any more. It's a very, very time-consuming business, and the good people expect to be treated with some respect. There's a lot of palaver around here about "a new act to replace the old Baldwin Act." I can tell you, we'd better change not just the construct; we'd better change the attitude. Good people at the local level are going to expect to be treated more responsibly than we have treated them in the last few months, particularly around their capital requests.

I understand ragging the puck for a while, but this government has ragged the puck to the point where it is an abuse of power and an insult to those local leaders whom we expect to applaud us all for a new Municipal Act.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: I want to congratulate the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for his remarks. He's covered a lot of ground. I just want to comment on a couple of them because I agree with almost everything he said and would reinforce some of the things he said.

In fact, the attitude of this government toward municipal governments has been completely disrespectful. They have dismissed city government unlike any other government before. They have treated them with disdain and so patronizingly, unlike any other government before. He's right when he says that.

He speaks of other issues of the download that are dear to me as well. The member from Northumberland, of course, understands but pretends not to. He says, "The member for Trinity-Spadina forgets to mention to the Ontario citizens that, yes, we have downloaded housing, but we picked up a fair amount of the education tax as well," so—he didn't say this—it evens out. But the member from Northumberland knows that it doesn't even out, and the member from Renfrew knows by experience that it doesn't even out, because they tell us the download has been an unfair trade. When you download housing, when you download roads and bridges as a responsibility, transit virtually completely, GO Transit, which they took back—member from Renfrew, by the way, my fear is they are taking it back to privatize it. In response to our question, "Are you doing so to privatize it?" the finance minister never answered the question. He never said, "No, we're not doing that to privatize it. We're taking it back because we understand that cities are broke." He didn't answer our question, so we're afraid the reason they're taking it over is to privatize it.

When you download so many of these services and cities are broke, they need help. The member from Renfrew speaks well on that.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I have to say that I commend the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. He is right when he says that at the present time we have to be very careful with this

government. We know the municipalities need a new Municipal Act, but going by what this government has done in the past, we have to be very, very careful.

I'm just going to give you a few examples of what this member brought to our attention. When the police services were transferred to the municipality—I'm going to give you Glengarry-Stormont-Dundas—they had 51 officers there. After they took over, the government said, "You've got to have 60 officers." All the time it was under the government, they were only paying for 51. But now that it is paid for by the municipality, they require 60.

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But the worst thing of all is, how much power will the municipality have? I'm going to give you a good example. At the present time—on May 7—this government amended the Municipal Act, without having the city of Ottawa's consent, to accept Quebec contractors to come in without electrical licences or master licences, to give them a chance. The city of Ottawa said, "For the protection of our people, they have to know the construction code and the electrical code of Ontario," and they said, "No matter, we want to give access to the Quebec contractors in the city of Ottawa." But we Ontarians can't go on the other side.

Just to tell you, this past week we won a case, but not because the Minister of Labour worked with us. I have advised him. Black Electric from Ottawa, Charlie Greenwell from CJOH, got on the program and finally we got a contract cancelled, even though we were going to pay \$167,000 more in federal tax. That's what it would have cost the taxpayers, because it was a government contract. But at no time did the Ontario government get involved.

Mr Martin: I think as usual it would do the public well, and particularly members across the way, to listen when the member for Renfrew speaks in this House, because he's been around a long time and he can connect the dots. He understands how things evolved and knows often sooner than many of us when something presents as false and ultimately will wind up making the government and all of us here look bad and provide an opportunity, even more than there is now with this government, for people to become cynical about the way government operates.

This government is presenting this bill as something substantial when in fact it really isn't. Our read of it says that it actually falls woefully short of the kind of change that would allow large cities in particular to develop to their full potential. For that to happen, municipalities would need more power to raise revenue from new sources and to be given control over revenue room; for example, the proposal we put forward as a caucus here that there be an Ontario transportation trust fund developed and put in place that municipalities could tap into and use to improve their transit systems, to make sure that people in cities like Toronto are able to move around freely, without polluting and creating the kind of logjam that we see every day on a regular basis as people come to work and go home from work.

That's what municipalities want. They want to be empowered to develop, so that they can become first-class cities, but they also need the resources that are necessary to go along with that, and if they're not being given the resources, they want the room to perhaps raise resources in some creative ways so they can afford to do those kinds of things.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I want to compliment my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. Much as he can relay his own experience here in this Legislature, I'd just like to relay a little bit of my own experience of having been a municipal politician who was first elected to a council in 1988 under a Liberal government, then witnessed five years under an NDP government and then witnessed another four and a half years under a Conservative government. I can tell you that as a municipal politician I didn't have a good thing to say about any of those three governments, because they all treated municipalities with disrespect. But in that 11 years that I spent in municipal politics, I never met a government quite like this government here: the disrespect they have shown toward municipalities, the downloading and the burden you have placed on the backs of future taxpayers in this province, be they roads and bridges, as the member referred to, be they the need for new user fees that have had to be raised by municipalities. Housing is a terrible burden.

What troubles me is that we have this Bill 111 here—believe me, municipalities have been calling for a new Municipal Act. We heard earlier this evening of the consultations that took place leading up to this Municipal Act, and we heard wonderful praise coming out of mouths, but I can assure you that any of those municipalities that gave praise to this act has not had an opportunity to read this piece of legislation. I plead with the government not to ram this piece of legislation through before this House rises. You must do the honourable thing and ensure there is proper consultation on this legislation before it is implemented and inflicted on the municipalities of this province.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Conway: Very briefly, I simply want to say that it would be uncharitable of me to say—as I indicated earlier, there are aspects of this bill that I think are commendable, but the difficulty I see with this legislation is, again, that it's rather like the Delphic Oracle: it might mean something, it might mean nothing; it might mean something good, it could very well be something bad. The devil is always in the details, and most of the details here are in regulations to be written and applied later on.

My concern, in summary, is this: I don't care how good your Municipal Act is, if there is not a proper division of responsibility between province and local government, if there is not an adequate tax base at the local level to sensibly shoulder the responsibilities assigned to local government, then you have got yourself a situation that is not going to be very happy.

Mr Marchese: Unsustainable.

Mr Conway: My friend from Trinity makes the point. I'll use the example again. In my part of eastern Ontario we have downloaded provincially 50% of our old highway system. We have been given not one cent of nearly \$4 billion worth of road-related provincial revenues. That's unsustainable.

I want to say as well that in some of these larger units of government, we have to a real degree privatized our politics. We now have urban communities where if you can't raise hundreds of thousands of dollars, you're not going to be a serious candidate to become mayor. I just watch what I see in that marketplace and I've got to tell you that there are some very interesting and not always very pleasant signals as to what's coming there. With those remarks, I'm happy to yield the floor.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marchese: If the Tories don't want to speak, there's always a good opportunity for New Democrats to stand up.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I beg your pardon?

Mr Chudleigh: You were supposed to be next.

Mr Marchese: No, but that's fine. There's no problem. We're happy to stand now, in advance of when I would properly be speaking. We've got members here to speak to these issues.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: You stay here, Ted, because I want you to listen to what I have to say, and Greg, don't go away. I'm just starting now. It's 20 minutes.

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): I've got to go and record this.

Mr Marchese: No, you don't have to record it; just pay attention to it. It's 20 minutes. Greg is so fresh in this place, he has to get his grip again. He's got to listen to a couple of us just to get the feel of what it's like to speak in this place. I understand.

This act, yes, has been praised by many. The member for Northumberland had a long list prepared by some staffer so as to compile quite naturally and properly a whole list of editorials that say how great you people are. I understand. I would do the same. Yes, they see some changes in this bill that many people like. We want to speak to some of the omissions in this bill, because I think the Ontario citizens who are not going to have the opportunity to read this bill, a thick bill, won't have a clue what's contained in the bill and what's not contained in it. So I want to make some comments about what's lacking in the bill.

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One of the things that is problematic—our colleague Michael Prue, the member for Beaches-East York, mentioned this and mentioned much more than I will be able to tackle in 20 minutes. He too has the same concerns I'm about to share with you. One of them is that this act will permit municipalities to change their ward boundaries, to be able to decide for themselves what kind of boundaries they will have, and that's a good thing. It should be a power that municipalities ought to have, but

there's one little problem. I think the minister, who is a fair-minded man, may have missed the fact that there is about to be some unfairness that will ensue as a result of this bill.

The City of Toronto Act is prescribed by the provincial government, and it says they will have to have boundaries that are half of provincial boundaries; in other words, one ward in half of the provincial boundary and the other ward in the other half of the provincial boundary. That is prescribed by the City of Toronto Act; in other words, the city of Toronto will not be able to decide its boundaries. Other cities in Ontario can do that, but the City of Toronto Act does not permit them to set their own boundaries.

That's a bit of a problem. It's not fair. The city of Toronto, with 2.3 million people, will not be able to set its boundaries. I think it's a problem. I think it's wrong. You can't have, member from Northumberland, such an uneven treatment of our municipalities. You can't treat Toronto in the way you are doing, in the way you have done, and say to the other municipalities that it's OK for them to have fairness across Ontario, but it's not OK for the city of Toronto.

It's not OK for the city of Ottawa equally under the same problem because they too have prescribed rules as to what they can and can't do. The city of Hamilton equally is treated badly, like Toronto and Ottawa. The City of Toronto Act supersedes the present act we are debating, meaning whatever is in the City of Toronto Act, for those of you who do not understand "supersede," applies. This bill does not give the justice that the city of Toronto and its citizens deserve.

I'm not quite sure whether this is an oversight. I suspect that it is done deliberately and that they know very consciously that they are treating some cities one way and the rest of the population differently. I say to you guys who are here listening, maybe you notice, maybe you don't. I've got to tell you, you still have a couple of members who are elected in the city of Toronto. I suspect Mr Stockwell, Mr Young, Mr Hastings, and a couple of other friends who are here—what's his name?—Morley Kells from Etobicoke, and you've got a couple of members from Scarborough—what are their names? Good heavens, I forget them, my good buddies.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Gilchrist from Scarborough, exactly. You've got so many. I'm not quite sure why they're not here tonight to remind the minister—

The Acting Speaker: We know we don't refer to members by name, nor do we refer to the absence of members.

Mr Marchese: I thank you, Speaker, for the latitude you gave me. It was so difficult to find them by their ridings and I thought it was kind of you to permit me to name them by name. I'll do my best to try to remember where they're from.

They've got a lot of members from the city of Toronto. They ought to be here debating tonight against M. Hodgson. They may not have had the opportunity in

their caucus to tell him, because maybe they didn't know and maybe they weren't told in the briefing that they may or may not have had that the city of Toronto gets treated differently.

I'm sure the Minister of Labour, who is a proud man, a very proud and confident man, might I add, wouldn't want his constituents to be treated any differently than someone from Durham—would he?—or Owen Sound, or anywhere for that matter, would he?

So I want to know where the Minister of Labour, M. Stockwell, and others from the city of Toronto are tonight to defend the interests of their citizens of the city of Toronto. Where are they? Why are they not defending the people they represent and the 2.3 million citizens we've got? They will not be able to change their boundaries in the way they see fit, in the way governments ought to be able to do because they are the ones who know how best to design their boundaries, not the province. They've done that for others but not for the city of Toronto, not for Hamilton, not for Ottawa. That's the first point.

Secondly, municipal standards will apply for matters of provincial significance and penalties will ensue for not meeting those standards. Now, we don't know what those standards are, we don't know what the criteria for those standards are, but it certainly frightens me, given the way municipalities have been treated by this government: with complete disrespect, complete dismissal as simply little municipalities that do not know how to manage their affairs. And thus we have a benevolent Conservative centralist government that has decided on their behalf how to deal with them. So they've decided that there will be standards, and there will be penalties if those standards are not met. And of course the ministers will set that standard on provincially mandated programs, and if they are not met, whatever those standards are, to be determined by this minister and who knows, by regulation, whatever they may be, there will be huge penalties, and it seems we don't know what that will be yet either.

If they meet the standards by 60%, does that mean the penalties will be severe and all of the money will be withdrawn for that particular program? What if they meet only 70% of provincially mandated programs, 75%, 80%? Or 85% or 90%? Are they saying the standards must be met 100%, otherwise money will be completely withdrawn for those programs? What are we saying? What is this government saying? I suspect that most of the members present here tonight have no clue of what it is that I speak. I am convinced they have no idea. Similar to the comments I made with respect to the previous issue about the city of Toronto not being treated the same way, I suspect most of the people in the Conservative Party elected in this place from the city of Toronto have no clue, because if they did they would be here standing up for their constituents. So that's the second matter that I have raised which is a bit of a problem.

The third that I raise Michael Prue has raised. In his hour he talked about many things, but the third problem

that he spoke to that I will touch on as well is that all the bylaws of municipalities will have to be either repealed or confirmed by the year 2006. For those who think it reasonable, one might say that four years is a significant amount of time for the city to be able to repeal or confirm their bylaws to match the laws as prescribed by the present bill that we are debating. But this is a huge workload and someone's got to pay.

I am told that in the city of Toronto there are as many as 15,000 bylaws on their books. Can you imagine how long it would take for someone, lawyer or otherwise, to go through 15,000 bylaws and determine which are consistent with the laws that they are about to pass and which are inconsistent and therefore need to be changed?

Billy, do you know what I mean?

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Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I'm trying to understand whether you're for it or not.

Mr Marchese: Because you're not listening. That's why you don't understand a single thing I'm talking about. You come from a community that I suspect doesn't have a whole heap of money, and when they have to repeal these bylaws that are inconsistent—because you need someone, Billy, to review those bylaws—do you know how long that takes? Billy, the maverick, have you told M. Hodgson, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, “You ain't going to do that to my community”? Have you told him that?

Mr Murdoch: Oh yes, I have, many times.

Mr Marchese: No, you haven't, Billy. You know that. I am sure you haven't gone to the minister and said to him, “Minister, it is going to cost money to review all of the bylaws that we have in our books and we're going to have to have some man and/or woman and it's going to take a whole long time, and I want a promise from you, Minister Hodgson, that the money is going to flow to the city, because we're broke.”

Mr Murdoch: It will. We'll make sure.

Mr Marchese: M. Murdoch from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound says, “Oh yes, the money will flow.” He scoffs not just at me but at his own party and his own constituents, because he knows better. He knows the insults that he's had to bear in his own little municipality and he knows the disdainful way that other people have been treated across the province and that money has not been flowing to the cities. In fact, it's being downloaded, not uploaded, to the extent that you might have some money. You're not getting any money. You're getting more services that you've got to bear and that your constituents have to bear through the property taxes, member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You're from where?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister without Portfolio [Health and Long-Term Care]): Bruce-Huron.

Mr Murdoch: She's from Bruce-Huron.

Mr Marchese: The member from Bruce-Huron is here tonight, and I think tonight she's going to stand up on behalf of her constituents, aren't you?

Hon Mrs Johns: Always do.

Mr Marchese: To say to them, “When the minister says, ‘You're going to have to review each and every one of those bylaws,’ the money will flow to make sure that we hire one, two or three individuals, whatever it takes, to make sure the job is done.” You will do that tonight, won't you?

Speaker, I tell you she's not going to stand up and say that tonight. Neither she nor the other member from Bruce-Grey will stand up tonight, as the maverick that he is, defending the interests of his constituents. They're nowhere to be found when we need them.

Mr Murdoch: I may do the two minutes.

Mr Marchese: Do two minutes, please, member from Bruce-Grey, but at least do something. Get on the record to show the public that you're here. Get on the record to criticize me or something. But do something. All of you who are in this place, from time to time you've got to stand up and speak, at least for a couple of minutes. If not for 10, if not for 20, stand up for two and say something. The public demands that at least of you. I don't know how some of you get elected. I don't know how in God's name you get elected because, you see, people want to see you speak. People want to see you defend your policies one way or the other, or to criticize your government in here when you think it's right and not in your own constituency, in the confines of the private house of someone where you can say, “I stand up for you.” Stand up in this Legislature for them and for the rest of Ontarians who want to hear you, member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

I'm not just picking on you; I'm picking on a whole lot of people tonight here. I'm picking on a whole lot of other people here who don't take the minutes that are allotted to them to speak in this place so the members can hear you and know what you have to say, how you're saying it, who you're defending, who you're attacking. It's your job.

These are a couple of things. Part V of course still says that any ministry in that position can decide on any restructuring of any municipality as it sees fit, as it has done in the past, where it's decided to amalgamate many constituencies like the city of Toronto because the city of Toronto deserved to be amalgamated.

Mr Murdoch: Poor city of Toronto. I have tears—

Mr Marchese: Yes, you cry. I can see the tears from the member from Bruce-Grey. His tears are just dripping down his eyes as he worries about the city of Toronto and the 2.3 million people who were here who were forcedly amalgamated by this government and didn't have a say. Now they say, “We want to consult with you before we make changes.” Ha. How can anybody trust you and your buddies and your ministers when they say, “We want to consult now before we axe something or other or we whack you in one way or another”? So now, before they get whacked they're going to be consulted. Big deal. Isn't that lovely? Now I know they will consult me and it will be fine after they whack me because they, in advance,

met with me in some room and said, "This is what we're going to do. What do you think?"

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You understand. So restructuring still is in place and they can decide at any moment what to do with any municipality. That's the power they've got. That's the power they love. They love centralized governments, these people here. They used to attack communism for being too overly centralized, you recall. These Tories, oh boy, do they hate communism. Now they don't have to worry, of course, because communist Russia is no longer in existence. They need some other enemy to go after.

Mr Martin: Mike Harris's Ontario has replaced them.

Mr Marchese: Mike Harris's Ontario has replaced them, quite conveniently, under a different kind of name. They're much more benevolent, aren't they? In the same way they treated the city of Toronto so kindly when they said, "You shall be forced into amalgamation because we think it's good for you." Now, to appease them, they're saying, "By the way, in the event there is going to be some major change, we will consult with you." How can anybody believe its intent when the attitude up to six years so far has been so poor? Nobody believes you.

You people have beaten up on every municipality in ways that I have never seen before. The member for Northumberland pretends he doesn't understand. You downloaded housing 100%. Yes, you took back some education, half of the education costs that come from property taxes, but the other half is still there. But you've downloaded housing 100%. Housing is coming out of our property taxes. What kind of a service is that for me as a homeowner to be paying for? A homeowner says, "I don't mind paying for the pipes that run through my house to get the water. I don't mind paying for the garbage removal. I don't mind paying for libraries. But hold on a moment. I've got to pay for housing?" Since when have property taxes been assigned to pay for housing, to pay for GO Transit? You now all of a sudden took back GO Transit because you realize that cities are broke. Since when have you told property owners that it's fair to tax them to pay for housing? Since when? Transit, child services and welfare are still on the backs of the property owners. Thirty per cent of welfare is still on the backs of the property owners. Tell them why that's still good. That download is hurting property owners like we've never seen before. This bill does not deal with that.

I come back to the first point. This bill says that the rules of the city of Toronto, unlike any other city, are prescribed as it relates to their boundaries. I think that's profoundly unfair. M. Hodgson, wherever you are, because you must be somewhere, I hope you get an earful from other citizens about this bill, and I hope you'll correct that before the end of the month.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr Sorbara: Now I know why I stayed this late.

Mr Murdoch: You're from Toronto and you're smiling. I can't believe, after listening to that passionate speech, that anybody living in Toronto would be smiling. We must all be crying down here. I come down here and the people are happy. But if you listened to the member for Trinity-Spadina, you'd believe everything is doom and gloom.

It was like that a few years ago. I can remember when the NDP was in government. Were they a socialist government or almost a communist government? I can remember back when you were there. You had the government. You had the power in your hands and you did nothing but spend money: \$10 billion a year, I believe it was, that we didn't bring in. That is what the NDP government did to us in Ontario. They put Ontario so low that we had to come in and change things so drastically that we had never seen anything like it before. The NDP can't understand that. They just can't understand what real life is all about, and it's unfortunate.

I think we are talking about Bill 111, the Municipal Act, but I didn't hear a lot from the member on that act, because he just wanted to talk about—well, we don't know what he wanted to talk about, actually; he was crying so much and was so worried about the people in Toronto. I think they're doing quite well.

I tell you, the Municipal Act was needed. The municipalities have asked for this act for a long, long time. They've been wanting something to happen.

If he says the minister said he will do this, I believe Minister Hodgson will do this. If it's going to cost a lot of money, he will help us in the municipalities. He has done that before. There are lots of transfer monies that have happened. It's not all doom and gloom. We had the doom-and-gloom days when the NDP were in government. They're no longer around. The Conservative government is in power now and the good days are here.

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Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I just wanted to briefly say to the member for Trinity-Spadina, as always, he puts on a remarkable display of passion and energy, and consistent and strong views on municipal issues. But I do hope that in his response he takes a moment to address at least one or two of the provisions in the bill.

Mr Martin: Aren't we in a feisty mood here tonight? I want to first of all say how much I appreciated some of the comments that the member for Trinity-Spadina—

Mr Sorbara: Some but not all.

Mr Martin: No, all of them, every last one of them. The member for Trinity-Spadina is a very learned, experienced and knowledgeable member in this place. It would serve people well, to understand how to deliver on the responsibility the government has to communities and people across this province, to listen to the member for Trinity-Spadina.

I just want to say as well, because the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound spoke, I was actually going to say something nice about him but I can't any more. I don't know what rock he's been living under for the last

five or six years or what he's been smoking up there in Bruce, but I'll tell you, it hasn't been good in this province for five or six years. There have been a lot of people struggling; a lot of municipalities are hurting. We've killed some people in Walkerton. We have people who have died who couldn't get what they needed on social assistance. We have all kinds of things.

Mr Murdoch: Remember who put us in this hole: \$50 billion in debt.

Mr Martin: The member from Bruce talks about putting the province in the hole. If you look at the financial numbers that have been put out by the Minister of Finance over the last three or four years, you'll recognize that this Conservative government that talks so much about cutting spending has actually driven this province into debt further than it was when they took over in 1995. We're in debt billions of dollars more than we were in 1995 because of the spending that you've done on income tax cuts, giving money away to your friends and benefactors, giving money away to people in this province who didn't need it. Is that what you call responsible and accountable government? At least when we were spending, we were giving it to people who needed it. We were putting it into public services that we could all access. This bill here does nothing to improve on their record.

Mr Peters: It's always a great evening to listen to the member from Trinity-Spadina because it is wonderful entertainment.

I want to go back to a couple of points that I think are of utmost importance with this legislation that's in front us. One is, do not ram this legislation through before this House rises this year. You've talked about consultation leading up to this legislation. Well, I'll tell you, the people who have come out and spoken in favour of this have not had an opportunity to read this legislation cover to cover. I urge you to ensure that there is consultation, and good consultation, on this legislation.

I want to point out one important aspect in this legislation and that is the recognition in this piece of legislation of the importance of the preservation of the municipal records. My own municipality of the county of Elgin next year is celebrating its 150th anniversary. That county has recognized the importance of preserving its records. The county of Elgin has established a local archives.

In this legislation, starting at section 253, there is recognition of the importance of the retention of records. I would urge you as a government to recognize that the Archives of Ontario cannot do it alone. There is a role for government to play in working with local municipalities to ensure that records are preserved for future generations. But you can't expect the municipalities to do this alone. So I would urge you to look at encouraging municipalities to establish archives, working with the provincial government to help fund these archives, or better yet, start to establish regional archives.

We've got the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital that is soon going to be empty because of the initiatives of this

government. Why not set up a regional archives and preserve these records for future generations?

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Marchese: I'm happy that the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London finds me entertaining. That's good. I'm equally happy that the member from Windsor-St Clair finds my speech equally entertaining. I would say to the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London that he should exercise some independence in his thinking and not take the lead from the member from Windsor-St Clair with respect to his comments. I've got to tell you both, and the other member, from the Conservative Party, that you're not rowing the boat—sorry, the ocean wherein you're rowing your little boat is simply not here, member from Windsor-St Clair.

I know you look puzzled, member from Windsor-St Clair and I know you're shaking your little head wildly in disbelief, as if to say, "What is this member saying?" Member from Windsor-St Clair, just to remind you of the three things, the three issues, I mentioned that properly pertain to this bill—maybe you're going to speak tonight so we can hear your pearls of wisdom—were the following. This act says that cities can now change their wards however they see fit, and the city of Toronto will not be able to do that. Member from Windsor-St Clair, this is part of the act. I don't know where you are, but I'm on this bill.

The other matter I raised is that the minister will set standards for provincially mandated programs. If the standards are not met, their funds will be withdrawn. What if they only meet 90%? What happens then? The member from Windsor-St Clair is still shaking his little head in disbelief as if to say, "Good heavens, it can't be part of this bill; I might have missed it."

The third one says that all laws will have to be repealed or confirmed by the year 2006. It's a huge workload. Where's the money going to come from? The member from Windsor-St Clair and the other poor folk and some of the other members are saying, "I don't know where these issues are coming from, and the download does not concern it." Please, I'm waiting to hear your pearls of wisdom.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The speeches are now of 10 minutes' duration.

Mr Chudleigh: I'm very pleased to speak today on the second reading of Bill 111, the Municipal Act, 2001. In 1995 the government made a commitment to bring in a new Municipal Act—1995, member from Elgin, that's when we made the commitment. We promised an act that would be modern, streamlined and easy to use. We wanted to introduce an act that would set out areas of responsibility for municipalities but would not tell them a great deal of exactly what they were permitted to do, nor tell them how to do it.

At the same time, we wanted to make sure of the fine balance that has been established over long years among competing interests, a balance that gives municipalities the authority they need to meet local needs while ensuring a dynamic barrier-free Ontario economy in which

Ontario towns and cities can maintain their competitive position.

After several years of discussion with all affected stakeholders, this legislation maintains that balance. The government released draft legislation in 1998 and it generated a lot of discussion. Since then the government has worked with key stakeholders, including both municipal and business groups, to find common ground and achieve a consensus through long periods of discussion.

Earlier this year, an understanding was reached among key stakeholders on most of the fundamental issues. At the conference of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario in August, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Chris Hodgson, released an outline of the government's proposed direction. Reaction by all stakeholders was very positive. If this legislation is passed by the Legislature, it would give municipalities the tools they need to tackle the challenges of governing in the 21st century. It would allow municipalities to organize and deliver their services as they see fit, involving the private sector where appropriate—I'm sure that'll make my friends opposite very happy—and in keeping with local needs.

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It would give municipalities broad, flexible authority in 10 specific areas of jurisdiction. Those 10 are: public utilities, waste management, public highways—public highways is an interesting one. When I was elected, the municipalities in Halton were complaining about all the gridlock that was taking place in their communities. Since 1995 the Queen Elizabeth Way has been expanded and streamlined. It is in another area of resurfacing and expansion now. The 403 was completed through my riding during that time period. The 407 was built and completed through the riding during that time period. The 401 was expanded and some changes, albeit small, were made to move traffic faster through that area.

In that same period of time—it's six years since we were elected, going on seven years now—I asked the municipality what they had done to enhance, let's say, east-west transportation. What highways have they expanded? What roads have they completed? None is the answer. What areas have they done in the north-south corridor? They are just now expanding Trafalgar Road to a four-lane road. While the province has done all this expansion on the 400 series highways, they have made one north-south improvement in local transportation. The public highways are a very important part of the responsibilities of the municipalities. The public will know, if there's gridlock on the roads, whose responsibility it is. It's a shared responsibility, but the municipalities have to do their share.

Public transportation systems will be part of the responsibilities of municipalities, and culture, parks, recreation and heritage will also be part of the responsibilities of municipalities.

Heritage is a particularly interesting piece that I have an interest in, because in the area of Halton, back in the bush, not far from Limehouse—Limehouse was named

for the lime kilns that were there in the mid-to-late 19th century—there are seven pot limehouse kilns that are left there. They must've been extremely well built back in the 1850s or 1860s, because from that time to today, those kilns sit there. Two of them are almost in perfect shape.

The dynamite house, which was very solidly built out of stone, has one portion of one corner of the roof caved in, but the rest of the building is intact. The heritage of this particular site: it is one of the finest restorable sites in Canada for lime production, for limestone kilns.

In those days they used to fill it full of wood first. They'd get the fire going as hot as they could. Then they'd shovel in the limestone and they'd keep the fire going for three or four days. When they had finished, that limestone had turned white and it was powder. As you took it out of the kiln, it would crumble and it would go through a hand-driven crusher system. What you ended up with was lime. It was the same process used by the Egyptians to make lime.

Here we have, in Halton, a pristine artifact site that is very restorable. There are a couple of fellows in a group of people from Limehouse who have received a Trillium grant and they're going to restore these buildings and maintain them for the future, a great part of Ontario heritage that will be saved and kept intact. That's a wonderful thing to happen.

We are suggesting that this responsibility for maintaining the heritage, not only of the limestone kilns, but the heritage of the old buildings, the heritage of the original town halls, the heritage of the original post offices or the original train stations in specific towns, will become part and parcel of the responsibility of municipalities. Who knows better what part of the culture in our communities needs to be saved than the people who live right in the area?

There will also be the drainage and flood control that will be part and parcel of the responsibility of the municipalities. That's a very important part. Who else knows better in any given community which areas are subject to flood, which areas should not be built on and which areas should be protected? Again that's an obvious responsibility.

Parking is something that is obviously municipal. There are parts of the province where parking is not a problem, but certainly in some of the developed areas in the greater Toronto area or in the Golden Horseshoe parking can become a significant problem, and that's something municipalities have to adapt to.

Economic and development services is an area that will be municipally controlled in the future. The structures not covered by the Building Code Act will be part of the responsibility of the municipalities, and that includes fencing and signs. It's about time that the municipalities took over responsibility for fencing. For years the fencing act was administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

There's an old saying in the country that good fences make for good neighbours. I well remember in my youth we had an apple farm in Halton. My brother has it now.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources):

What a great memory.

Mr Chudleigh: I have a great memory. I can remember back to my youth. That's quite an accomplishment. It gets a little hazy now and then.

Back in those days our neighbours on two sides of the farm—one was a dairyman and one was a cattleman, but they both had these big cows running around in their fields. Of course, in the apple business who needs a fence? You know you don't need a fence, so we never maintained our fences very much. It didn't matter much. Then, boy, about two or three years down the road we started finding out that our neighbours don't like us very much, and we couldn't figure out why. We thought we were pretty nice guys. We finally figured out that our fences had become rather bad. In fact, the agricultural representative, the ag rep in those days, came out to the farm and said, "I had a little complaint about your fences." We said, "Who cares? We don't need fences. He's got cattle. Let him fix the fences."

Mr Murdoch: That's awful.

Mr Chudleigh: And that's not the way it works, as the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound knows. When you stand in the centre of your farm, the half of the fence on your back boundary on the left side is yours and you maintain it. On every fence you look at, the left-hand side, the half of it is yours and it's your responsibility to fix it. Well, we learned a lesson that day. We fixed up all our fences and then our neighbours started to like us again and life got a lot easier.

So it's about time municipalities took over that responsibility. I think it's an important one that they should have.

They also have in here that they're going to look after animals. I hope they're referring to pets, not farm animals—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr Peters: I just want to make some comments on what the member for Halton had to say this evening.

First off, I appreciate his interest in heritage. I think it's incumbent on every one of us in this Legislature to do everything we can to ensure the heritage and preserve those historic sites in this province. But, at the same time, I don't think it should all be delegated down and downloaded to local municipalities to do that. If you really want to strengthen and do something for heritage in the province, bring forward a new Ontario Heritage Act. The Ontario Heritage Act has been in place since 1974, and we've seen very little in the way of amendments. I know that my honourable friend from Trinity-Spadina has brought forth initiatives to ensure that heritage buildings have good preservation and have good rules in place so the buildings aren't going to be demolished. So if you want to do something that's good for heritage, don't download it to municipalities; do something like bringing forth a brand new Ontario Heritage Act.

As well, the honourable member makes reference to programs that, again, are going to be downloaded to

municipalities. Fencing is a very important issue in rural communities. Again you talk of downloading these responsibilities to municipalities, but are you going to provide the financial resources to municipalities to hire the staff? I think that's something that's missing in many ways in this legislation. If you went out and did the proper consultation on this piece of legislation that's in front of us here, you would hear over and over again that you are downloading more responsibilities to municipalities but you're not flowing the resources through to them. A good, open public consultation—don't ram this legislation through.

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Mr Marchese: Member from Halton, I appreciate the cheery defence of the bill. You talked a great deal about heritage, and the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London made some good points with respect to the issue of heritage.

Cities do not have the power to prevent heritage buildings from being demolished. They do not have that power; they ought to have that power. This bill could give them the power they seek in order to protect our heritage—yours and mine. The member for Halton might speak to this minor little point, which he may or may not dismiss or tackle. He might want to tackle it, the other.

All cities can now change their wards. The city of Toronto cannot; the city of Hamilton cannot; the city of Ottawa cannot. Why? Because the City of Toronto Act says that they can't change their boundaries on their own because it's prescribed by law by the provincial government.

The member for Scarborough East is here now. He may want in his two minutes to defend what this government is doing or not.

Why cannot the city of Toronto have the power to change its ward boundaries the way other cities do with this act? Maybe the member for Scarborough East, who is here with us today, can comment on that and maybe the member for Halton could comment on the fact that the download of housing, in particular, and many other issues, put an undue responsibility on the property taxpayer that he and she cannot bear on their own. Property taxes cannot pay for housing on their own. It's bad. I wonder if the member for Halton has any comment with respect to it as well?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'm of course going to say nice things about this bill. I'm struck by the fact that the member opposite had earlier commented that there was no one from Toronto. I would remind him that while it's been four years since the amalgamation, Scarborough is still part of Toronto. My colleague the Liberal member from Scarborough North and I both represent excellent ridings of people who care as much about the significance of this bill as anyone living in your riding.

When you look at the long-overdue changes that need to be made—the relationship between the province and municipalities, and between municipalities and their citizens—I think what we've put into this bill, after great

deliberation and years of research, is really going to move those relationships forward.

I'm pleased to support this bill. I'm struck by the fact that the member opposite seems to have found a couple of very minor points to criticize while leaving aside the bulk of the bill and the obvious need, one must assume, to make all the other changes, since he chose not to highlight any of those in his critical comments. I encourage him to look at the balance of the bill and spend some time: talk to the businesses in your community, talk to citizens who have been vexed by a lot of things the city of Toronto government does to them, about taxes that are inordinately high—in fact five times higher than some of the surrounding communities—talk to the tenants who are paying four and a half times as much as homeowners for the same square footage, talk to the businesses that are being driven out of the city of Toronto because of the high tax rates, and yet lower services, and I think we can all agree there's a need to change the relationship between the city and its citizens. This bill will help to do that.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The member for Halton did not dwell at any length, if at all, on the lack of protection for municipalities that are perhaps facing forced amalgamation. I know there have been some pronouncements made on the government side about perhaps backing off these forced amalgamations, but in Niagara there are still Tory politicians who are itching to have one big region, one big everything in the Niagara region. We have a concern. We looked in this legislation to see if there would be forced amalgamation. I looked carefully through the bill to try to determine whether there was protection from that and I could not find that explicitly stated in the legislation.

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke earlier this evening quoted from the C.D. Howe Institute, hardly a left-wing or even a small-l liberal institute, condemning forced amalgamations and talking about the virtue of smaller communities. In addition to this, I have quoted many times from a book called *Merger Mania* by Dr Andrew Sancton of the University of Western Ontario. Both of these people or organizations have made in-depth studies of forced amalgamations and have come to the conclusion that these huge municipalities do not necessarily (a) save money, or (b) provide the kind of responsiveness municipalities need. I find nothing in this legislation to protect municipalities from forced amalgamation.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Chudleigh: I'd like to thank the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, who also represents the town of Dorchester, a particularly favourite spot of mine in Ontario. It's a wonderful place. I see his mailings coming there sometimes. Some of them have some accuracy, some of them don't.

The member for Trinity-Spadina talked about the heritage aspect of this act, whether the municipalities would have that responsibility in their hands. They have that responsibility right now. This particular issue is

probably a microcosm of the difference between the NDP and the Conservative Party. The way it is now and the way it will be in the future is that the municipality that wants to protect its heritage can ask for that responsibility. I don't believe any municipality has ever been denied that responsibility in Ontario. But if it's not important to that municipality, they don't have to ask for it. The responsibility doesn't fall on their shoulders automatically. They have to ask for it if it's important to them.

So people take on the responsibilities they feel are important to them and leave those responsibilities aside in which they have no interest. It's an individual responsibility thing; it's not something that's dictated by government, such as the NDP would take on. It's a fundamental difference in the way we see the responsibilities of governance and the way they saw the responsibilities of governance. As was pointed out by the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound so succinctly in his previous comments, they drove the government into \$50 billion worth of debt, with deficits up to \$15 billion a year. Their type of government, being all things to all people, perhaps doesn't work quite as well as they might lead you to believe in the Legislature this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Duncan: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to join this debate. Let me start by saying that like my colleagues in the official opposition, I will be voting against this bill. I want to take a few minutes to address it. I think the member from Northumberland related notionally that there was a lot of consultation, and I suspect there was. I'd like to take the time allocated to briefly review some of the components of the bill that I think are worthwhile and praiseworthy; I want to address several issues that have been left out of the bill; then I want to address several issues that are in the bill but in our view are not good steps and not things we can support and which make it very difficult to support the bill in its entirety.

A number of members have talked about past actions of this government, and I want to lend my voice to those who have said that given the way this government has treated municipalities over time, this is really a small step in addressing some of the problems that in fact this government created. We've talked and heard a lot of debate tonight about forced amalgamation, downloading and the ultimate cost to property taxpayers of that downloading. This government, in my view, has left a legacy and a record that will prove itself, I fear in relatively short order, to have been very detrimental to our cities, to the people who live in those cities and to the people who pay property taxes in those cities.

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I think of my own community of Windsor, Ontario. In light of a downturn, in light of an economic recession, there are going to be pressures even greater on that municipality than there have been up until now: the pressures of a rising welfare caseload and declining property tax revenues; the pressures of a social housing

stock that has been ill-maintained by all levels of government over the course of the last 20 years; the pressures associated with now offering services such as ambulance, which have been downloaded to municipalities. I say, with respect, to the members of the government opposite, there was not adequate compensation in the exchange for some of the school taxes that the province granted at the time it downloaded in such a massive way and restructured how we govern ourselves at the local level.

Like the government, we believe there must be a new relationship built between the province and municipalities. It must be built on the principles of trust and parity. The time of municipalities being forced to come to Queen's Park on bended knee, in our view, must come to an end, and to that end I will offer some ideas that we think will benefit working families and our communities.

The government has properly said that this very large bill, which I have had a chance to peruse, is a complete rewrite of the previous Municipal Act. It is the basic framework and structure of governance and powers of Ontario municipalities. It streamlines the old bill, which I believe was in the vicinity of about 1,000 pages, down to about 350. It doesn't deal with other stand-alone legislation such as the Planning Act and the Building Code Act, which impact on municipalities as well and are major pieces of legislation.

Let me talk to the government for a moment or two about some of the positive elements of the bill, some of the elements that I see as positive and that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party would see as positive. There is acknowledgement for the first time that municipalities are responsible and accountable governments in the delivery of certain services and are not just the wards of the province. This is indeed a positive step forward. I had the privilege of serving on the city of Windsor's council for some six years and there was always that sense, not as an elected politician but rather as a citizen of that community, that the municipal level of government was not taken seriously. I must say, having had the benefit of serving there for six years and here for six years now, that in fact municipal governments are, in my view and my experience, more accountable, and need to be.

There is a commitment to formally recognize the importance of prior consultation between the province and municipalities in matters that directly affect them. In short, the government is acknowledging, albeit in a backhanded way, that their approach to municipal affairs over the course of the last six years has been all wrong, because in the course of this government's mandate consultation has been entirely lacking. Where there has been consultation with the voters—in the case of the city of Toronto on amalgamation—the government has, of course, ignored the results.

They've provided certain new powers for flexible municipal financing tools, debt and financing roles, wider construction financing tools, greater investment flexibility and new means to partner with the private sector

on the undertaking of public projects. There is some benefit in this, I acknowledge, and I believe those goals are worth supporting. I should say, however, that because of this government's approach to municipalities over the course of the last six years, municipalities are desperate for these tools because the old and more traditional ways municipalities raised funds for their various projects have been severely undermined.

They've granted unilateral powers, including natural person powers, for municipalities in a variety of areas, which we think is a positive step. Specific powers are also delegated for elements of health and safety and the natural environment, which again we see as a positive step.

I should say that this bill incorporates three private members' bills that were introduced by members of the Liberal caucus. My colleague Sandra Pupatello's rave bill is incorporated in this and will give municipalities the ability to license and regulate raves. There is Michael Bryant's and Dave Levac's Bill 104, which allowed municipalities the ability to restrict and regulate the use of fortifications on buildings, and Bill 111 grants these powers to municipalities. These were ideas that were put forward by us. Finally, my colleague from Sudbury's bill, Rick Bartolucci's Bill 24, allows for the licensing and regulation of adult entertainment parlours by municipalities. It gives them expanded powers to regulate body-rub and adult entertainment parlours. We think this is a positive step. We have had legislation on the order paper to this effect for some time.

There are missing elements. Most importantly, from our perspective, the so-called memorandum of understanding that commits the province to consult with municipalities before making policy changes was not included with this bill. The government has only committed to discussing the MOU after the bill is passed. At a minimum, in our view, this memorandum of understanding should have been incorporated into the bill. It would have given it much greater force and it would have forced this government and future governments to deal with municipalities in a more even-handed manner.

We're not going to be allowed to review and debate many of the key elements of this bill because, like so much else, they're left to regulation. The government will do that, presumably without any debate of a public nature. So we have some difficulties with that.

Finally, there are no new powers for municipalities to raise revenues from new taxes. We believe that municipalities should be given that opportunity. We believe they're responsible. We believe in many instances over time they've been more responsible than the provincial and federal levels of government in this area, and we're not afraid to say that they should have the power to make those decisions.

There are some negative elements to the bill that we strongly oppose. The report card provisions of Bill 46, the Public Sector Accountability Act, are transferred to this bill. Municipalities will be forced to use provincially designed report cards, business plans and measurements.

We find this part particularly ironic, given that this is probably one of the least accountable governments in the history of this province. It is a government that resists accountability on many fronts.

Again, as has been cited by a number of my colleagues, there is nothing in the bill to stop forced amalgamations. Amalgamation is still a concern for the town of Tecumseh in my riding, a town that has a long and proud tradition, that wants to maintain its independence, a town that joined with the county of Essex to help reduce the number of municipalities in that county. They are still confronted with the prospect of amalgamation or forced annexation with the city of Windsor, something they, like I, oppose. I would have liked to have seen something in this bill to that effect.

AMO and a number of other groups have lent their support, in broadly speaking terms, to this bill. Not surprisingly, there are elements worthy of discussion. I urge the government—I see the government's House leader is here tonight—that this bill is indeed worthy of extensive committee hearings. We ought to have the chance to amend it. I can say that our caucus has a number of amendments we'd like to put to this bill. I would imagine that by the time the debate has gone further in this House and across the province, other organizations, groups, will have amendments that they would like to bring forward. We would support public hearings across the province on this bill. We think it would be important to have those and we would be more than willing to offer amendments to that bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions? Comments?

Mr Peters: I'd like to compliment my colleague from Windsor-St Clair. He brings up a number of very good points, some aspects of this legislation that really haven't been fully addressed by this government. I think one of the most important points that he raises is the issue of the memorandum of understanding. This is such a vital part of the discussions that have taken place that have led to the development of this legislation and I think the point he makes, of the inclusion of the memorandum of understanding in the legislation, is of extreme importance. I would hope that the government listens to what the honourable member has to say and seriously considers the incorporation of the MOU in this legislation.

The other aspect that he raises is the difficulties that municipalities have in trying to develop new revenue sources, because the revenue sources are so limited for a municipal council; the property tax base is virtually it, and user fees. We've seen what municipalities across this province have had to do because of the downloading this government has inflicted on them over the years. It has forced municipalities to come up with new user fees to pay for the costs of services that had been previously provided and supported by the provincial government.

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I think the government should look at new ways to help municipalities raise revenues, and one of those areas would be to give the municipalities a share of the gas tax. If you look at the hundreds and thousands of kilometres

of roads that you've downloaded to municipalities, give the municipalities a share of that gas tax so that they can help get some new revenues. Again—we've said it over and over—committee hearings. This is a piece of legislation that's too big and too important to this province to ram through.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Response?

Mr Duncan: I'll be brief. We will vote against the bill for the reasons I outlined.

I did want to add that one of the concerns I have representing the riding of Windsor-St Clair and indeed the community of Windsor is the downloading of roads, Huron Church Road specifically. I again want to use this opportunity as we debate municipal responsibility to urge the province of Ontario, as part of our response to the security issues and indeed the border issues, as a first step that can move very quickly to address a serious concern for our community and indeed for the province, given the amount of goods that flow across the border at Windsor, to upload Huron Church Road back to the province. It was the responsibility of the province until 1997. It ought to be the responsibility of the province again. It is with the city of Windsor. It's a road that is without question a major link in this province. It's one that the province should take back again in order to begin the process of redeveloping that corridor to accommodate increasing trade and the flow of goods across not only the Ambassador Bridge but potentially future new border crossings.

We look forward to debating this bill further in the House. We look forward to the opportunity to provide amendments in committee, and we look forward to the opportunity to do that throughout the province of Ontario in order that all partners have yet another kick at the can. Consultation did happen before the bill, there's no question, and this bill took a long time. There are elements of the bill that in our view are positive. But participants or stakeholders, whether they're taxpayers, municipalities or municipal politicians, ought to have the opportunity, now that the government has very clearly put on paper where it stands, to respond and propose amendments.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): It's a pleasure to rise in the House tonight to speak on Bill 111, the Municipal Act, 2001. It's interesting to listen to some of the comments that have been made tonight with regard to this new Municipal Act. It's an act that's been kicking around probably for some 150-odd years, and there's no doubt life has changed in rural and urban Ontario in the past 50 to 150 years. The change, the revision of this act has been a long time coming and it's about time that this government's had the intestinal fortitude to introduce this act.

But let me first of all quote what Ann Mulvale, president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, said, "We believe that the legislation will go a long way to recognizing the importance of the municipal order of

government, the wisdom of government-to-government discussions.”

I think earlier on the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, in his experience as a municipal politician, was very fair in his comment when he said that whichever government is in power at the provincial level tends to irritate municipal governments. I would concur with that because I think every political party in the province of Ontario over the years has been guilty sometimes of not communicating very well with municipal governments.

However, having said that, I am sure that he will also agree that there are municipalities in the province of Ontario that have been very well managed, both administratively and politically, while others leave an awful lot of to be desired. For instance, in my community in the town of Petrolia in Lambton county, where I had the honour and privilege of sitting on council for six years and then as mayor for nine years, I look at some of the changes we implemented under the old Municipal Act—and there’s no doubt that at times it was a challenge to try to stay within the boundaries of the meaning of the act itself.

In 1985, the first year I was elected mayor, we decided as a community, as a council, that we would eliminate building permit fees and imposed fees, and there was a reason for that. Being a small community competing with the larger centres in southwestern Ontario, we were at an economic disadvantage. How do you attract economic activity to your own community? You have to do things in a different manner. That’s why we did that. We eliminated the building permit fees and any imposed fees. Guess what happened? People saw the merit of moving and building a new house in that community. It doesn’t take a space scientist to realize that you’ll get the building permit fees once, when the house or residence is built, but your taxes will go on and on. Furthermore, attracting more residents to the community is good for the commercial sector in the community. I’m sure the member from Elgin-Middlesex has probably done some unique things in his own community over the years.

I heard the member from Trinity-Spadina talk about social housing and affordable housing. Here’s a member who talks about affordable housing, but I have yet to see him criticize the city of Toronto where, under their multi-residential rate, they’re assessing residents of apartment buildings at a higher rate than they do the commercial sector, to the point where they’re paying almost five times as much as a residence.

Why is it that in the city of Toronto there’s no apartment building construction? It’s all done under the disguise of condominiums because condominiums are assessed at the residential rate. What does it do? If you were to take an apartment assessed at \$100,000 in the city of Toronto, the reduction in taxes would be in the neighbourhood of \$1,985 a year. That’s a little bit better than \$150 a month. If somebody is paying \$900 and you take off \$150 a month, you bring it down to \$750. If you’re on a limited income of \$25,000, \$30,000, whatever it is, it certainly makes that unit somewhat more affordable.

Affordable housing means different things to different people. There is a debate in the city of Toronto with regard to rooming houses. How should they be assessed? For some people, I might suggest that a room that is 10 by 10 or 10 by 12 could be affordable housing on a temporary basis because of, perhaps, some personal difficulties. There are many issues you can deal with. There are many issues this act deals with.

Another one I would like to point out in the town of Petrolia is that we have our own water treatment plant. A number of years ago, in 1976, the government of the day came along and said, “Your water treatment plant is antiquated. We think you should shut it down and buy water from somewhere else.” As a community we said, “No, we feel the water treatment plant is adequate. With some upgrades, we can provide potable water to the people of the area.” Guess what? Twenty-five years later, after some upgrades on a full-recovery basis, having every residence, business and industry in the community and surrounding area metered so that users pay—if somebody misuses, they pay more. What’s wrong with that? Some people seem to have difficulties with this.

The new Municipal Act will also provide natural person powers and spheres. This will benefit municipalities in many ways. For instance, before, things like the blue box program needed special legislation. Even things as minor as dog licensing and regulating barbed wire fences needed specific legislative amendments. Under the Municipal Act, municipalities will be able to deal with that directly.

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Municipal corporations will also be able to set up various existing legal forms of business to achieve better value in providing municipal services. Elliot Lake recently required special legislation to set up a corporation to sell cottage lots. I’m sure that if you’re aware of the economic situation in Elliot Lake, this is probably an attractive way and a responsible way for the municipality to create a new source of revenue. However, under the old Municipal Act they were not able to do this; under this act they will be able to control their own destiny.

Let’s talk about user fees under the new act. The new act will provide enhanced accountability requirements, specifically the minister’s authority to divide user fees into different categories with different rules applying to each category. Fees that are often disputed would be in a category that would be subject to more process requirements.

When we talk about user fees and permit fees, for instance, the minister has had to intervene in the past couple of years because municipalities are charging utility companies exorbitant fees for crossing municipal streets. It’s a revenue grab. Some may defend it, but I think you have to be responsible. The minister had to issue an order that you could only charge your costs. It was done on a cost-recovery basis. There’s no doubt that under the new Municipal Act there will be parameters whereby municipalities will be able to charge a certain levy.

When we talk about business being driven out of Toronto, and one of the members was talking tonight about business being driven out of Toronto, there are a number of reasons. When we look at the tax rates in some of the communities—I don't want to point fingers, but when we look at what's occurring in Toronto and we see the commercial and industrial sector moving outside the area to the suburbs and the surrounding municipalities, why is that? As I said in my opening statement, there's no doubt we have municipalities in Ontario that are very well managed, but the converse of that is that we have others that have not done a very good job in the past. I'm sure this act will help municipalities to deal in a responsible manner in the future.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bradley: I know that within the 10-minute time limit that's been imposed on members by the new rule changes imposed by this government, the member didn't have—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Rules everybody agreed to.

Mr Bradley: No, not everybody agreed to them.

Mr Duncan: Under duress.

Mr Bradley: It's when you put a gun to people's head and say that it's either death by fire or death by hanging or something like that, and you give them a choice.

Anyway, I was distracted. What I wanted to say to the member was that I know he didn't have enough time within that period of time to talk about the implications of the downloading of responsibilities on to local municipalities, the fact that this bill does not deal with that downloading, does not rectify the situation imposed upon municipalities.

The member for Trinity-Spadina mentioned housing as one. Take away the city of Toronto, where you had a criticism. I can tell you that within the regional municipality of Niagara there's a good deal of apprehension among those who sit on regional council at the potential cost, first of all, of improving and renovating the existing housing stock, which the province has allowed to fall into disrepair, and also of operating those housing units within their jurisdiction.

They feel this is going to be an onerous cost, just as they do with some of the new responsibilities they have in the field of public health, where they have to make cutbacks to meet their budget requirements. This again is in public health and in social services and in terms of land ambulances where, first of all, you were going to foist the whole financial responsibility, and now half the financial responsibility. I hope the member will have a chance to respond to the downloading implications.

Mr Martin: There's potential here to get our caucus onside with this bill, but we're saying that a number of things have to happen. One of them is that there be full public consultation at the committee stage and that we not rush through this, as has been suggested, during constituency week. It just doesn't give anybody the time required to do the homework, to get out and talk to people and bring them forward, and to travel.

Mr Marchese: We've got two years until this comes into effect.

Mr Martin: Exactly. This bill doesn't come into effect until 2003. So we're asking, why the big rush? It took a long time to get it to this point. Why speed the process up to that degree so we have to go out and consult over constituency week, which is only a week away, and then leave fallow the January, February and March time period? That's when we could go out and travel all over the province and hear from all kinds of people so that when we change this very significant act we do that which is going to be most helpful, so it's an act that will do what the government proposes needs to be done and what municipalities out there are calling for.

The other thing we're interested in seeing before we could give our imprimatur to this bill is that this memorandum of understanding be signed; that the municipalities and the organizations that represent them feel comfortable and confident enough that they will actually sign the memorandum of understanding.

If those two things are done and we get proper process here in this place, then we might be able to support it.

Mr Peters: I certainly appreciate where my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is coming from, his own municipal experience. It's very important that those of us who have come from a municipal background try and bring forward some of our own experiences there. I appreciate his comment about municipalities having to be creative. Every municipal government has been forced to be creative in things they do in trying to attract new business and development into their communities.

One important aspect of this legislation in front of us this evening is section 106, under "Economic Development Services." That is where no municipality shall provide assistance directly or indirectly. I think that's of utmost importance, to ensure that no municipality is going to bonus to try to attract an industry into its community. We've all been faced with it. We've seen the United States offering 10-year tax exemptions etc to try and attract industry. But at least in Ontario we have a level playing field, and that level playing field is being maintained.

But I've got some concerns when you look at section 109, under "Community development corporations." I would ask that a thorough review be done. The member made reference to municipalities being creative. If one reads this, it looks like it could be a back doorway for a municipality to be creative, through a community development corporation providing some assistance or potentially bonusing to try to attract an industry. I would hope that in the consultations that are going to take place there is a very good review of community development corporations in section 109. I certainly hope that this isn't a back doorway to allow bonusing in this province.

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Mr Marchese: I wonder whether the member from Lambton-Kent might want to touch on the issue that has been raised by my colleague and friend from Sault Ste Marie, and that is the whole matter of consultations. If

the bill does not come into effect until 2003, we quite frankly do not understand why it is that you need to rush these consultations in the constituency week, which is but a week away. Surely you would want proper timelines or proper consultations to happen, making sure that everyone has the time to be able to understand what is contained in the bill and, hopefully, possibly read the bill to understand how they may be impacted positively or negatively. Give the time that is necessary for that.

Constituency week is an important week for members, where presumably—and most of us do this—we are to be in our ridings doing constituency work with our community where we do not have the time in the course of our duties here in the assembly. During those legislative months, we've got to be here and we don't have time to get into our constituency. Constituency week belongs to our members to be in our constituencies doing work required of us. People want to see us often and we don't have the time, or at least some of you don't have the time, to meet with them. This is a time for government members in particular not to be travelling around the province but to be in their constituencies to meet with people who want to speak to you about this bill and presumably so many other issues of concern to them. There is no need, I say to the citizens of Ontario, to rush these consultations, particularly during the constituency week, absolutely no need at all.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Beaubien: I would like to thank the members from St Catharines, Sault Ste Marie, Elgin-Middlesex-London and Trinity-Spadina.

First of all, with regard to the downloading in the housing stock, the shape of the housing stock, I would point out to the member for St Catharines that I am still the chair of a non-profit housing corporation in the town of Petrolia named Mid Valley. The complex is 29 units. It was built in 1978. It's 21 years old. I would invite you to come and look at it. I strongly suggest to you that it is in tiptop shape, that as a corporation we've acted responsibly in the past 20-odd years and we've maintained that as housing stock so the people who are living there can afford it and live in adequate housing.

The member for Trinity-Spadina talked about the consultation process. There's no doubt that an awful lot of consultation has occurred with regard to this bill, and probably more will occur. I would ask the member, when you were in government, you came out with the social contract. How much consultation did you do with the people of the province of Ontario? To the best of my recollection, I don't think there was an awful lot of consultation. It's fine for you to point fingers at this side of the House, but I'm sure there must have been an awful lot of people, just a few short years back, who were probably pointing a finger at you for the lack of consultation.

With regard to constituency week, I totally agree with you that my responsibility during that week is to look after the needs of my constituents. I have done that for the past six and a half years, and I will continue to do that. Whenever somebody wants to talk to me and meet

with me, they're always welcome, and I'm sure my constituents know that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: Again we look at a piece of legislation that has some considerable history. As is the case with many pieces of legislation, it has some supportable elements. The government members will tend to extol the virtues of the legislation; the responsibility of the opposition will be to point out where we think there are deficiencies, something that's missing or perhaps something that isn't the way it should be. I'll deal immediately with the issue of privatization.

What this points to, in terms of its accountability for municipalities, is that they are forced to "identify alternate means of delivering its services, including the delivery of those services by the private sector." My suggestion is that this government is out promoting as much as possible the privatization of municipal services across this province. Indeed, there are some municipalities now looking around at some fat offers coming in from the United States from American firms that have some bizarre schemes that are very attractive. Because they are having to assume new and onerous financial responsibilities, some municipalities are looking with some interest, as I know the regional municipality of Niagara is, to some company in the southern United States that wants to come in and buy the water and sewer system in Niagara. They say, "It's only because we are using it as a tax write-off." That's why they're interested.

Well, some of the examples we've seen around the world and right here in Ontario haven't exactly been shining successes when it comes to privatization of public services. It seems to me that what this government is doing is not only enabling but pointing in the direction of the privatization of those services. Municipalities often trot off to Toronto privately to talk to the former deputy mayor of Indianapolis, who has this great scheme, Skip Kip, or some name like that. He has this wonderful scheme, he says, to privatize services. You don't hear them announce it in their local newspaper, but they trot off to the backrooms of Toronto and listen to this person extol the virtues of privatization. I think that's what is contained within this bill.

I also worry now that the cost of hospital restructuring—restructuring which, by the way, was not asked for by municipalities—is going to be foisted on the local taxpayer. When there was hospital construction, or reconstruction, taking place in a community, the provincial government usually paid something like two thirds or perhaps up to 70% of the cost of that hospital construction, if it was approved by the Ministry of Health. The rest was to be raised by various fundraising efforts within the community. What is happening in more recent years, because there are so many groups and organizations out there trying to raise money as a result of the funding cutbacks from the provincial government, is that we have a circumstance where municipalities are being asked to add all kinds of money and funding to the municipal tax base. In other words, municipal taxes will go up sub-

stantially to pay for hospital construction. To me, that is something that should be within the provincial purview and local fundraising efforts because the municipal tax base already has to absorb so many of the downloaded services from the provincial government.

The friends of the Tories locally, who like to complain about their municipal taxes, love to attack the local municipality because then they don't have to attack their Tory friends, or they close their mind to the fact that downloading has had a substantial effect on municipal governments. An example I gave a little while ago in this House was that of public housing. That is a very onerous financial responsibility being transferred to municipalities. I know the regional municipality of Niagara anticipates that there will be considerable additional costs they will have to bear as a result.

What is missing in this legislation is companion legislation, perhaps, which deals with the Planning Act, because what we have seen is urban sprawl taking place under this government. The government will do a full retreat tomorrow, I'm sure, on the Oak Ridges moraine. Because of the pressure of Mike Colle, the Liberal MPP who represents a north Toronto riding and who has carried this issue in the Legislature, and because of those who have worked with him in the environmental movement and because of public pressure in the media, I suspect this government will do a full retreat, that the white flags will come out tomorrow, that we'll hear the beeping sound as they're backing up, and there will be an order for retreat. Well, I like the fact that that's going to happen, if indeed that's what's happening, but right across this province we've seen urban sprawl continue. What we need are strong provincial planning rules that do not allow municipalities to encroach upon environmentally desirable lands and on good farmland in the province.

I also look at amalgamation, and there is still no guarantee that amalgamation will take place only with the consent of the local municipality.

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I've mentioned in this House many times the excellent book written by Dr Andrew Sancton of the University of Western Ontario called *Merger Mania*, which talks about the dire consequences in many cases of these huge forced mergers. One of the examples he uses is in the metropolitan Montreal area. I've heard Dr Sancton speak, and what he points out with a lot of authority and research is that, first of all, you don't save money with these huge municipalities and, second, that you lose the local accountability that people like to have at that local level.

The C.D. Howe Institute, which is a small-c conservative think-tank, was quoted extensively by the member for Renfrew, Sean Conway, earlier this evening. They came to the conclusion that these forced amalgamations were not good, seldom saved money and did not provide better services. It's a mania that people get into, an obsession they begin to be involved with.

Our local newspaper, the *St Catharines Standard*, could find an excuse every day to say that if only we had

one big region, whatever the problem was would be solved. That seems to have abated recently as the government has backed off after some considerable opposition has arisen in places where they have forced amalgamations.

I worry about section 109, which the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London mentioned, and that is the potential for municipalities being able to bonus through the back door. In the United States, the big corporations or businesses play one municipality off against the other and there are certain concessions which are granted. By the end of the day, it ends up that the business sector is paying next to nothing and the residential tax rate is up substantially. Should municipalities try to make their municipality attractive to business? Of course they should. But I don't think there's any benefit, for instance, in the province of Ontario bidding against the state of Michigan by giving all kinds of grants and money to companies to locate in one jurisdiction or another, and I say the same thing is true of one municipality to the other.

While I'm on my feet, I should talk about—and I know the Minister of Energy was interested in this earlier—these municipalities that can't wait to sell their electric utility. Why do they want that? They can get the money for it. It's instant money. They've lost a major asset but they've got instant money and they can say, "Look, we haven't raised taxes," or they can spend money on their pet projects. I agreed with the Minister of Energy when he was lamenting the fact that in many cases they were simply making money from their hydro utility to use for municipal purposes. I see nothing in this legislation that prevents that from happening, and for that reason I think it's deficient in a number of ways.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Martin: I'm always happy to comment on the speeches given by the member for St Catharines. The only problem in this place these days is that they're never long enough any more. The rules have been changed to a point now where you hardly get any time to speak—10 minutes. You can hardly get warmed up in 10 minutes.

The member from St Catharines is always good at pointing out where bills have good points and bad points. He talks about hostages. Every bill that comes from this government, it seems, has something in it that we really have to be careful about. Where it may look good on the surface, underneath, when you really get into it, there's usually a hostage, the member for St Catharines says. I say a Trojan Horse. He mentions the possibility of bonus-ing coming in the back door. That may be one.

He also, I think rightfully, points to the reality that big isn't always better and that amalgamation, which this government is pushing, particularly forced amalgamation, which this bill doesn't do away with, is not necessarily in the best interests of communities across this province. There are many communities across Ontario now that had particular and special characters of their own, had a history and a cultural personality that they presented. That gets lost when you join it to bigger

entities and amalgamate simply to create efficiencies which don't, in the end, end up appearing anyway.

It would do us all well around this place to listen to each other from time to time, and I think the points the member for St Catharines has made tonight are of that nature and in that ilk. I thank him for taking the few short minutes he had here tonight to explain a couple of things that I think we need to be wary of. I would ask him, though, in his response to maybe tell me if he thinks that we need more consultation on the bill and if doing it during constituency week is the right way to go.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I noticed that the member made reference with respect to contributions by municipalities to hospitals and other health institutions in the community. This has been a long tradition in our province, and the city of London has recently made a very substantial contribution to the London Health Sciences Centre. That contribution was made because the people of London wanted to make that contribution. They understand the importance of that institution to their health and to the well-being of their community generally. I think that's a long tradition which should be maintained and encouraged in this province.

He also spoke of municipal mergers, and of course we have a long history of those in this province as well. I would draw to the attention of the House that very few of those mergers have been reversed. Almost all of them have stood the test of time. The only one I know of that has been reversed, actually, is one that this government reversed in Haldimand-Norfolk. So it is quite true that governments of all stripes have from time to time stepped up to the plate and resolved a problem. The experience over time has been that those solutions have been good. I hope the member in his response will identify for us what mergers of municipalities he would reverse if his party formed the government.

I'd also like to comment very briefly on his reference to public-private partnerships. This also is a long tradition of municipalities in Ontario, and those kinds of partnerships have indeed provided good service and good efficiency to people throughout Ontario. I would invite him to tell us which of these public-private partnerships he thinks have not been helpful, which haven't worked for the people of those municipalities. That would certainly be helpful information to the Legislature.

Mr Peters: I'm pleased to rise and compliment my colleague from St Catharines on the comments he has made this evening. In almost three hours of debate this evening we've heard the good things in the bill. We've heard some good things in the bill from this side. We've also heard from this side a lot of faults that are in this legislation.

Municipal politicians are the ones who are closest to the people. Municipal politicians, though, unlike ever before, have had more responsibilities placed on their backs as a result of downloading from this government. I think it's incumbent on every one of us in this Legislature that we do everything we can to work with

our municipal partners and truly treat them the way they should be treated.

From 1849, when the Baldwin Act set out the county representation in this province, to today municipalities have made great strides. But we've got to work with municipalities. This piece of legislation is like the Bible to a municipality. This is what is going to guide them. This is what's going to give them the tools. You can't ram this legislation down their throats. You can't spend a few days of consultation during our constituency week to consult on this legislation. This legislation is too important to the municipalities in this province. I think it's incumbent on every one of us in this Legislature to ensure that this mammoth piece of legislation has its just due and is properly consulted on with all municipalities in this province. I plead with the government not to ram this legislation through. Do the proper thing and see that there is consultation.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I congratulate you for having the endurance that you have had this evening to sit in the chair and listen to the rest of us for hours and hours. It must be hard. I couldn't do it. So I wanted to congratulate you.

Second, I want to congratulate the member for St Catharines for always being ready, willing and able to speak on pieces of legislation introduced by the Conservative government. He makes the time because he believes it's important to do that. I know his constituents want to see him and hear him speak on the issues. That's why we are happy to hear from the Conservative members from time to time; take the full 20 minutes and not just sit there and not even do two minutes.

I agree with the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London. He's right. We believe, New Democrats as well, that this is an important bill. Municipalities support this bill, and we are happy to have them come to a committee to tell us why they support it, and we want to hear from those who have some difference of opinion and would like to see it made better, would like to see improvements. We don't believe constituency week is the time to do that. We want to hear from people, as the member for St Catharines noted, who have some concerns about these big cities this government has created, and you're right, Jim.

Professor Sancton said it, but so many other professors said that bigger is not better and bigger is not cheaper. In fact, it costs more. Making it bigger means you're removed from your constituencies. You don't see people as often as you would if you had a little city. You dislocate people and services in a way that is incomprehensible to most people. This government can still do that with this bill. They can still restructure and reorganize however they want because they have the power, they've used it in the past and they'll use it in the future. Speak to those things again, member for St Catharines.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: The clear theme that comes through from the responses, certainly from the member for Sault

Ste Marie, the member for Trinity-Spadina and the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, is the need for appropriate consultation. There has been pre-consultation, and I think that's important and I want to acknowledge that. But this bill does not come into effect for such a long time that it seems to me to utilize what we call constituency week, when we all want to get back to meet with our constituents and try to get caught up in that aspect of our work, isn't most appropriate. I would concur in the feelings that have been expressed that indeed we should have that kind of consultation to fine-tune the bill. Who knows? If the bill is fixed the way we would like to see it fixed, you might even see the opposition vote in favour of it. That's always a possibility.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: Some members think I'm going too far. That can always happen. If only you would listen to many of the good ideas that are brought forward. Listen,

there are at least three of us here who are on the alternative fuels committee. There's a committee where much of the work that is done is on a non-partisan basis, and I think we're going to get a lot done because of that.

I know that my friend from London West wanted me to address some of his issues. I recognize that over the years there has been hospital funding on the municipal tax base. What I'm seeing is a more onerous responsibility financially being placed on the municipalities, and I don't think they can afford it, particularly because of the downloading.

I'm sorry I don't have time to address more of your questions.

The Acting Speaker: It being at least 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2134.

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