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Monday 5 December 2005

Lundi 5 décembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 December 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 décembre 2005

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESPECT FOR
MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005
SUR LE RESPECT DES MUNICIPALITÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 1, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 37, An Act to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la protection des contribuables en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Monique M. Smith): The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Before I continue with the speech I started the other night, I would personally like to thank you for sitting in the chair tonight to allow me to finish the speech. As a member of the third party, it is sometimes very difficult to try to balance nine portfolios of which I am the critic with the Speaker's duties from time to time. I must say that I am most thankful that when my speech did not conclude the other night you agreed to sit in the chair to allow me to finish my speech. In turn, I promise you that within the hour I will resume the chair—unless, of course, you like it there—and continue my duties in that role.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): She's doing better already.

Mr. Prue: I think she is doing a fine job, and it looks really good to me to see a woman in the chair, because I think that certainly calms down what we see in this august House.

If I can just recapture some of what was said the other night—I think I was on a bit of a roll, but it was about 25 minutes into my speech when it was over. I'd just like to recap where I had already gone last time before I continue the speech.

I started off by talking about how this is a very small bill. It is in fact only one page long. The bill contains only one provision, and that is to wrestle the Liberal Party and the government from a commitment they made in the last election; that is, to honour the Taxpayer Protection Act. How the Liberals fell over themselves to attend on that day before the taxpayers' federation to sign

a document. Today, they probably rue the day that they actually had the temerity or the gall or something to go there and sign a document that at this point they wish they never had.

I went on to talk about the city of Toronto in particular and about how the cost overruns had really done a disservice since amalgamation; how things like MFP had surfaced, which would never have happened under the city as it existed heretofore when it was not amalgamated, because it was absolutely impossible for people to read the agendas that came out. I talked about the time when we as city councillors got the agenda. It was three volumes thick, and we got that on Thursday for the Monday morning meeting. On the Monday morning before we started, we asked someone with a computer to push a button and see how many words were in those three very thick volumes they had given to us. There were more words in that particular set of documents than were contained in the entire Holy Bible. I challenge anyone in this room, or in any room in any place across the city of Toronto or in Ontario or in Canada, to go home on Thursday night and start reading the Holy Bible and on Monday morning say, "I finished it and I'm ready to discuss the contents." Quite literally, it cannot be done. I told everyone on the last occasion that the Holy Bible at least has some sex and a plot, which, of course, you will not find in the minutes of the Toronto council meetings.

I talked about how citizen involvement has gone way, way down since amalgamation. In East York we used to have 350 people involved in the boards and committees of our beloved borough, and today in East York there are only three people who volunteer for the boards and committees of the city of Toronto. Those same people who used to be involved in the civic infrastructure, those same people who used to be able to help our city and our borough grow, aren't there any more.

1850

I went on to talk about the ballooning deficits and how today it's very sad to see the mayor of Toronto come forward year after year and talk about the \$300 million, \$400 million or \$500 million he needs to keep the city afloat. These things didn't happen before. I talked a little bit about the downloading, what has happened in the city and what has happened in virtually every single municipality across this province because of the downloaded services. The money they need they can no longer find. They cannot find that money and they're paying for things they never paid for before.

I talked about the province. I said it was a brilliant policy of obfuscation. I know the chief government whip

was about to stand up because he thought that that may be unparliamentary, but I have to tell you that obfuscation is only about making things cloudy, making them unclear, so that when you look at it, you don't understand what you're seeing. I think that's what has happened to the taxpayers of the city of Toronto and the taxpayers of every single municipality across this great province, because they do not understand what is happening with their municipal tax monies.

I went on, on that occasion, to talk about the reality of municipal taxation. I go to a lot of meetings and ask people to put up their hands: "How many people here think that the money you spend goes to things like firefighting, libraries or roads and sewers in your municipality?" Do you know, the majority of people put up their hands, thinking that that's where their tax money goes for what they spend on their property taxes. The reality is that that is not the case. This is the wonderful obfuscation that the Conservatives gave us and that the Liberals continue.

The reality is—and I'm sure the government House leader will admit that all of this is true—\$6.1 billion of the money that is collected from the taxes on property goes to education—a laudable and worthwhile goal, but it is a provincial program. Some \$1.3 billion goes to ODSP and Ontario Works. Again, I'm not going to tell you that we don't need to spend the money there, except that you collect the taxes for a provincial goal from homeowners and property owners. Nearly \$1 billion goes to social housing. It's the same thing: You collect that money from the property owners who don't realize you are collecting that money from them. They think it's going for municipal services.

Three hundred and twelve million dollars goes to ambulance—\$312 million that the ordinary taxpayer in all of the cities and towns and unincorporated territories thinks is going to their individual municipalities which in fact it is not. Two hundred and sixty-six million dollars that you collect from property tax goes to public health—again, a laudable goal, except the people paying the tax think they're paying it to their municipality.

Last but not least, \$193 million goes to child care, a purpose that I totally and completely agree with, except for the fact that people think it's coming from their income tax, PST and provincial revenues and, in fact, you are collecting it all from people who are paying their property taxes. This is the reality. This is brilliant obfuscation.

I went on to talk about AMO, the provincial organization, Pat Vanini and the wonderful things they say. I gave a couple of quotes, which I'm not going to quote again, just talking about how Ontario is the only provincial government in Canada that takes the money in the way I have just described. British Columbia doesn't take it that way; Nova Scotia doesn't take it that way; Quebec doesn't take it. We are the ones that are beholden; we are the ones that are wedded to the fact that we want to take this from the municipal taxpayer. We want to take it from people who think they are actually

looking at their fire departments, they are actually looking at whether they have enough police on the streets, whether the library has enough books, whether the roads and sewers are functioning as they should, at garbage collection and everything else. They are the real paupers when it comes to this, because \$17 billion in total is collected from municipal taxation, from the property tax, and \$9.3 billion, more than half, 55%, ends up in the province's pocket.

I have to question this, and so does AMO. Pat Vanini was pretty brilliant in a couple of sentences and said that the municipalities want more money, but they don't necessarily want the right to tax for it, because they realize quite fully that when they increase the taxes—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: No, just listen to me. When they increase the taxes, they increase your profit and our profit as well, because when they increase, as Mississauga is going to, 5.9%, the municipal portion that they need increases 5.9% for roads, sewers, the fire department, the police, libraries and all those good things, but our portion increases 5.9%, too. Who gets the flak? Does the government get the flak? No.

Mr. Duguid: It goes into their services.

Mr. Prue: No, no. Listen to this Liberal spin: "It goes into their services." It goes into provincial programs that are provincially mandated that we are required to pay our portion of. What happens is that when they increase their taxes, they increase the revenue for the province.

I tell you, it's really easy as a provincial politician, especially if I was on the government side, which I have never had the privilege of. But I will tell you, if you're on that side of the House, it's really easy because Mayor Miller or Mayor Di Ianni or the mayors of 470 individual municipalities in this province can raise their taxes and the revenue flows to the province. What a brilliant thing. Every single taxpayer blames the mayor, every single taxpayer except those who are really in the know blames their local councillors. But the reality is that a lot of the money ends up here. Most of the money ends up here, and that's what I have some difficulties with. I think some of them do, too.

The last time I talked about Pat Vanini, I talked about AMO, but this time I'd like to go forward and talk about what other municipal leaders are saying. I have a few quotes here, which I think are rather good. The first one is from David Soknacki, who is the councillor responsible for the budget in Toronto. I have a couple of quotes here from him. It's back in the Toronto Star, November 15, 2005. I think he hit it pretty well. It's only a couple of weeks old, and it reads as follows:

"Budget Chief David Soknacki warned that levying new taxes won't solve the city's perennial budget woes, given the provincial downloading of welfare, public housing and transit costs.

"For next year's \$7-billion-plus operating budget, the city is estimating a shortfall of \$400 million to \$500 million.

“To be given options for perhaps a tenth of that doesn't go all the way to addressing the fundamental issues,” Soknacki said, referring to the taxing options.

“It looks as if we'll continue to have the revenue powers of a 19th century town that is taking on the responsibilities and obligations of a 21st century city.”

“Original estimates suggested the new taxing powers—such as tacking on fees to vehicle registration licences or a share of land transfer taxes—would generate \$50 million a year.

“With taxes on bar drinks or concert tickets, it would likely generate more than that, but city finance officials have not crunched the numbers yet.”

1900

This is the reality. The government is today looking to increase the way that cities can tax, knowing full well that if there is any downfall from this, if there is any public reaction to this, it will most assuredly come against the municipalities that are cash-strapped, and at the same time knowing full well that there is not enough money in the powers that they are putting forward to actually solve the municipality's problems. David Soknacki has talked about Toronto, and I think he said it very well two or three weeks ago.

I went on and looked at what some of the other municipalities were saying. I found from the Peterborough Examiner a couple of good lines which I thought were interesting as well. This is nearly a year old, back to February 17, 2005. The Peterborough Examiner is quoting Councillor Ron Gerow, who said he “feared many residents will lose their houses. With no sign of Prime Minister Paul Martin's new deal for municipalities in sight, he called for pressure on the Premier.

“It's time for a new deal with the rural municipalities in Ontario. I want you to take that back to the Premier,” Gerow told Leal,” referring to the member from Peterborough.

“Leal replied the province is working on initiatives such as reworking equalization and he's personally starting a ‘crusade’ to have the province take back responsibility for land ambulance services.

“If moved back to the province it would free up funding you need,” Leal said.

“In the county's case, it would free up \$1,621,183. That cost will likely rise to more than \$2 million next year when contracts are renegotiated, Coun. Jim Whelan said.

“He went on to list all the other costs the county pays for—which were provincial responsibilities—that have pushed the county budget to \$35 million from \$9 million,” only 15 years ago.

The councillors in big, urban places and smaller urban places like Peterborough and the county that surrounds it know that the taxation they raise is not necessarily for them. They raise it for provincial programs. The councillor in Peterborough county knows full well, as explained full well to the member from Peterborough, that the land ambulance costs alone are costing them \$1.6 million, soon to go up to \$2 million. That is a lot of money to a

small, rural county. It is a lot of money that ought not to be spent.

Quite frankly, I'm taken back to the time and to the statement of Pat Vanini, who said, yes, they need the money, but they don't necessarily want the money to come from their taxing ability, because they are smart enough as politicians to understand and to realize that the reality here is that they are going to be blamed for it.

I went on and looked at Royson James—anybody from Toronto knows Royson. Royson is quite astute. He's quite the Liberal, though, I have to tell you. He's usually on your side, nine times out of 10. Going back to the summer, on June 8, 2005, he wrote a column: “City is Stuck in a \$1B Hole and Sinking Fast.” It was his opinion, and what he wrote in that column says, “If the province followed the advice of many studies and took the costs of housing and social services off the property tax bill, Toronto would be halfway toward closing the gap.

“Those are some of the options Miller floated yesterday. Without a share of income and sales tax and/or the province taking back the costs of housing and welfare, Toronto is sunk.”

The province continues to take this money, and it's very easy money to take because you do not ever have to bear the consequences of having people angry at you for taking that money. They mistakenly think to this day that it is coming from the city when their taxes go up, whereas in fact it is coming from provincially mandated services.

I looked, last but not least, to—if I can even find it here now. It doesn't seem to be right here, but there was an article by Ian Urquhart, which I guess is lost to the vagaries of time here, where he talked about the same thing: the reality that this province is holding on to revenue that is quite rightly not its own; it is quite rightly revenue that is collected by the municipalities that you so conveniently continue to take.

I disagree vehemently and wholeheartedly and totally with what Mike Harris did over the years he was Premier of this province. One of the things he so shrewdly accomplished was to download to the municipalities and then make it appear that the municipalities were unable to pay their fair share. You are continuing the same ideal he once did so brilliantly. You're doing it brilliantly too.

You know, somebody like me has to stand up once in a while and tell you straight to your face that there are some people who understand that this is not the case. Whether it be Royson James, Ian Urquhart, somebody from the Peterborough newspaper or somebody from the city of Toronto, people are starting to understand that the downloading cannot continue.

I'm always amazed, as one of the people who talk most fervently, passionately and in favour of this city where I have spent my entire life. I talk about the glory of Toronto, about the Queen City, about the place where people have come over the generations and built for themselves and for their families. I talk about how this was once a city people came to from all around the world

to study as a governance structure, and how it worked. They don't come any more, because they all recognize today that the governance structure does not work, that the money that is necessary to make this city truly great—Peter Ustinov called it “New York run by the Swiss.” They don't come any more and talk about that. They don't come and say, “Look at the wonderful governance model of the city of Toronto. Look at how brilliantly it's working as a unicity with one mayor and 44 councillors.” They don't talk about that any more, quite frankly, because it's not true. People come now to look at the city as an example of what they should not do in terms of governance.

We are struggling as a city. We are struggling as a group of communities that live within the city to make this the kind of place of which we used to be so proud. We can be proud again; I'm not saying that the city is completely lost. But what it needs is a vision. It needs a vision on two fronts. The first one is to give the city of Toronto and the people who live here an opportunity to take their city back. Far more than the money that is being talked about, that is the most important. I will tell you that the most important thing this government can do in the new City of Toronto Act is give back power to the local residents, give them the option and the opportunity of once again participating in a municipal structure where their voices are listened to, where their voices are respected, where what they say is important, where the ordinary citizen can come before the mayor and council and make a difference. That's not what happens today.

I will tell you that I left there. I see the member from Scarborough Centre. I'm sure the new member from Scarborough—Rouge River and the member from Scarborough Southwest will say the same thing. We were all on that council. They can all tell you the same thing, and I'm sure they will: The citizens who used to come to our respective communities in those days talked to a mayor and a council who were responsive to them. They now come and talk to a councillor who may listen to them, but the rest of the people sitting around the table come from far-flung places. If you're talking about a problem in Scarborough, and you're dealing with a group of people from Etobicoke, North York, York and the west end of the city of Toronto who don't even know your neighbourhood, who don't know the intersections you're talking about and who don't know the problems, it is extremely frustrating. And those same politicians are the ones who do not have to look to you for a vote. So very often, when I was there, and I'm sure they will all tell you the same thing, you would see that the politicians who attentively listened were the ones from the proximity. Those who came from 20 or 30 kilometres away often had very little time to listen to the actual debate or what the citizens wanted. The citizens are not stupid; they understood that this structure does not work for them.

1910

What they want is a city that works, and I'm hoping that with the new City of Toronto Act that real power is

given back to the individual citizens. That is what is missing most. People will talk about, “Is the city \$500 million in debt?” Of course it is. “Is the city incapable of carrying on the same functions that it did when it was Metro Toronto and the six local municipalities?” Of course it is. There isn't a city on the face of this planet that has been able to overcome the barrage that we took from the previous government—not a single one; not Indianapolis, which was the great plan, because they are going back to the way it was; not London, because they went back to the way it was; not Amsterdam, because they went back to the way it was; not the cities in Sweden, because they went back to the way it was.

But here is Toronto, unable to go back. The City of Toronto Act, of which the minister has spoken so many times, needs to go back. It needs to give power back to the citizens.

I live in hope that one day you'll give us back East York, York, North York, Scarborough, Etobicoke and Toronto and we can all live our lives again. But I'm not that naive, because I don't think any Liberal has that kind of nerve to do it.

I am hoping that you will allow the city of Toronto to at least look at the option of having eight or 10 or 12 community councils that have the authority to look after local and neighbourhood stuff. If the neighbours and residents can go there and can look and say, “I could make a real difference and make my voice heard about the development in my community and about which sidewalks are repaired or which roads are repaired or whether the library needs services more than the new fire hall that we've been advocating for for years,” if the local citizens can make that difference, then you will have done a great service. That's the big one. If you do that, then I will even sit down and tell you that the money is not important. But I don't believe in my heart of hearts that's going to happen.

So I'm going to talk about money, because we think that the money needs to flow to the municipalities. If there is one level of government that doesn't have enough money, it quite clearly is them. The 450 of them do not have enough money. It is one thing to say, “Give them the power to tax,” but that comes with all the pitfalls that politicians are afraid of, of actually raising the taxes. So many of us here in this room were once municipal politicians. So many of us in this room know how difficult it is to raise the property taxes.

We need some kind of signal from this government that you are going to give the municipalities an option other than that. If that's the only option, very few of them are actually going to take you up, because it's a double-edged sword. It's probably—I don't know—a 10-edged sword.

I also have to talk for a minute about the city of Toronto, my pride, my joy, the place I have spent 56 of my 57 years in—a wonderful city.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): You don't look 57.

Mr. Prue: I'm 57 years old. The only year of my entire existence that I did not live in Toronto was the year that I spent going to university in Ottawa, Carleton University, for my master's degree. I spent one year in that lovely city too. And that's the second-biggest city. I want to talk about that too. What has happened in the city of Toronto in all the negotiations that have gone on, which I half welcome because I don't know where it's going to go, I have to tell you that other cities have expected the same from this government.

I met with the mayor of Ottawa. If there was ever an unhappy man, an unhappy mayor, it is the mayor of Ottawa, because early on in the process, you sat down for a new City of Toronto Act and talked about how we had to help the biggest city in Ontario, and indeed you do, but you know something? You have to help the city of Ottawa too. You have told the mayor of Ottawa that you're not going to do it, that he is now somehow frozen out of the process. You have told him that Ottawa doesn't matter. You have told him that what you're doing for Toronto will not be visited on his municipality, which is the second largest.

I talked to the mayor of Hamilton through several people. I talked about what you were doing with them. I talked to Mayor Miller about what you were doing with Hamilton, and you've frozen them out, too. Hamilton seems less inclined to be critical of this because they think that what Toronto gets, they may have to wait two or three or five or 10 years and they'll get too. But I'll tell you, there are some noses out of joint in that city as well. I'm certain that the minister from there, sitting across from me—

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Like Sam Merulla.

Mr. Prue: Yes. There are some people there who are not very happy that Hamilton, a very large city of nearly a half-million people, has been left out of the process as well. The mayor of Mississauga is unhappy, I'm sure; the mayor of Brampton is unhappy; the mayor of London is unhappy, and of Thunder Bay is unhappy—I can go down through all of the large cities. They have not been consulted as well. They need to have been consulted. What you are doing for the large city of Toronto, you need to do for all of the large cities of Ontario. They all have—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: No. This bill may do it, but the City of Toronto Act of which the minister has talked so often is not doing it.

We have the whole reality of the property tax. I want to talk about that for a minute. The property tax in Ontario is not working for many citizens. You will have seen the polls that came out in the last few weeks. People were asked about whether they think the property tax is fair or is a fair tax to them, to the property that they own and to their neighbours. The majority of people think that it is not fair. Do you know why? Because they don't understand that the government of Ontario is taking more

than half of it. They truly, mistakenly believe that it all goes to pay for municipal services. They don't understand why, when they see cities like Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton, the streets somehow seem to be a little dirtier or why the fire department that used to get there in 3.3 minutes now takes 3.4 minutes. They don't understand—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: I'm just talking about the big cities here, for now. We'll talk about rural Ontario in a minute. They don't understand where their money has gone and how they continue to pay more but it continues to get worse.

I have some considerable empathy for all of those people. We go out and talk about the property tax system, which is patently unfair. All I have to tell you is that the previous government did it, and the Liberals of that time sitting right there beside me talked about how unfair it was.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Yes. Well, you may still be beside me, but you're not beside me in the same sense because you're not still saying that you think it's unfair. Now you have accepted the reality of what they did; you're not trying to make the changes that are necessary.

I remember going up to Ottawa to talk to 300 or so people in a room. They were very upset about their member of Parliament, who is now a minister, coming and telling them just a year ago that he was going to do everything possible within his power to change the property tax system, then not showing up to the meeting this year and not trying to do anything about it. These are the people who understand that it's not working for them. They understand that the property taxes don't work. They understand that the cities aren't working the way they're supposed to. The majority of people in this province live in urban municipalities. I'm sorry for those who live in rural who keep telling me to talk about the rural, but the reality is that the majority live in urbanized places, with about 75% or 80% now living in cities and towns above 100,000 people. That is the reality. They don't understand how their services decline and their taxes go up. We have an obligation in this province to make that work.

You've signed the Taxpayer Protection Act—I'd like to close with this—and you promised to abide by it. I am thankful that you have the good sense not to do so. This is the second time that you have said you're no longer going to do so. I would ask all of the members of this House on that side to stand up and say, "We're no longer going to be bound by it, and we are going to do what is right by the cities and towns and the people who live in them in this province of Ontario."

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Thank you, Speaker. I certainly welcome the member from Nipissing to the position of the Speaker's chair.

What we are debating tonight is Bill 37, the Respect for Municipalities Act. I think we need to go back to what the intent of that bill is, which is respect for

municipalities. I was on a municipal council, a very rural municipal council, for two terms. One of the things that was the most difficult to do was to deliver the services that the ratepayers expected. In rural communities, traditionally, we know we have limited revenues as a municipality, and the expectations of the council were lowered because of that. But over the years we have gotten families into our communities who are not from a rural background. They have higher expectations. They come to council expecting more services.

What we've heard from municipalities is that they are looking for ways to raise revenues that are different than just through the property tax system. This bill gives those municipalities that respect. It allows them to be the order of government and of governance that they should be. It allows them to take advantage of any future bills which would give them the opportunity to raise new revenues that would not require them to have a referendum under the Taxpayer Protection Act of 1999. Certainly, it doesn't mean that they can't have a referendum, but it allows them to take advantage of opportunities that they see to raise the revenues they need to deliver the services the ratepayers want. This allows them to be responsible, responsive, self-reliant and accountable to their ratepayers.

I noticed that the member from Beaches–East York talked about the AMO response, but AMO is also in favour of this bill. They recognize the importance of the respect that they are deserving of and that they should be given.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from Beaches–East York on Bill 37. We have a slightly different name for Bill 37, the Respect for Municipalities Act. We call it the disrespect for taxpayers act, because as the member from Beaches–East York pointed out in his speech, the core reason for this bill is to extricate the Premier from his election promise.

I'll just remind members here about the election promise the Premier made. On September 11, 2003, Dalton McGuinty publicly signed the pledge, stating that he would respect the Taxpayer Protection Act. He signed that, of course, during the 2003 general election. He said, "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise ... that I will not raise taxes or implement" any "new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters...." Further, "I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act."

In this particular bill, Bill 37, the disrespect for taxpayers act, the new section 3.1 of the act provides that a referendum is not required "with respect to a bill that gives a municipality the authority to levy a new tax." This is really a backdoor method whereby the Premier can get out of a promise he made. It was a very visible promise that he signed in public and used in all kinds of promotions during the election campaign. So that's really what this bill is all about.

I would also like to remind the member from Beaches–East York that there are many municipalities other than

the city of Toronto. In fact, in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka we have 26 municipalities, some very small, some with just 500 people, and some larger ones, particularly in the district of Muskoka. They face challenges, although on a much smaller scale, equal to the challenges faced by the city of Toronto.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I listened to the member for Beaches–East York. I have a great deal of respect for that member, and I do need to share with him that it's OK to support a good bill. Being in opposition doesn't prevent supporting a good bill.

We often talk about levels of government as if one is more important than the other, when in fact I believe that they are three separate governments that serve quite separate roles. I have been around municipal governments for quite some time, and I quite frankly continue to be impressed every day with the quality of people who let their names stand for election to our municipal councils. These are good people who are clearly very responsible to the public; in fact, the election every three years ensures that councillors make the decisions that the public wants.

But we need to give them some latitude. Times change, and certainly the provincial government has a role in supervising municipal governments, but at the same time, as their challenges and their needs change, I believe that there's a need for them to have powers—not as a tax grab, and it's easy to present this bill as a tax grab, but it isn't. This is a bill that allows the local municipal councils to make decisions that reflect their community. We saw in the last government how a cookie-cutter approach was taken, that the needs of every municipality could be addressed by one simple formula. We recognize the differences in municipalities. Not one is better than the other, but each community in Ontario is truly unique.

This is a bill that will allow them to adjust the mix of the money coming in to reflect the wealth in their community, to reflect the diversity, the difference between industries and commerce and residential ratepayers, because that changes profoundly from one municipality to another.

What this bill does is allow local councillors to use their brains. They have the wisdom, they have the skills but they've not had the power. I strongly support a bill that recognizes the talents that exist in our local councils.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I find the remarks by some of the government bench quite amazing, given, for instance, that the member for Prince Edward–Hastings, in 1999, on Bill 7, the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, 1999—I see those who voted in favour of it, and sitting in the Legislature with us tonight are Mr. Levac and, lo and behold, there's Mr. Parsons' name, as well.

Essentially, I guess our greatest objection to this bill and the disrespect it shows for the process that went on with regard to Bill 7, which was supported by the Liberal caucus at that time, is not only did the Liberal caucus vote for the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget

Act, 1999, but they also made a promise in the election that they would keep it. Now we have a bill which is not only going to go against what they said in the election, but it's going to go against how they voted in the Legislature.

I must say that the member for Beaches–East York's caucus—although I don't notice the member's name on the record, because he wasn't elected at that point in time in 1999—voted against the bill, and therefore I understand his objections to that bill and what this bill stands for in reversing that. I can understand why there would be some empathy with that. So this is about a two-faced Liberal government at this time.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Beaches–East York has two minutes.

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Mr. Prue: I'd like to thank the members from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Prince Edward–Hastings and Lanark–Carleton for their comments.

To the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, I understand and fully agree that we have to respect municipalities. Municipalities have not been respected in the way they have needed to be for quite a number of years. When you talk about a referendum, the former government said a referendum was necessary, and you are going to say that a referendum is not. I welcome that, because I don't think a referendum is necessary, and quite frankly, I wouldn't trust you to do the referendum anyway, because the only municipality that ever had a referendum was the city of Kawartha Lakes. Even though the majority of those people in a government-sanctioned referendum voted the way they did, your government turned around and said you wouldn't abide by it anyway. So I have to tell you, notwithstanding that, referendums are quite useless.

The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka talked about respect for the Taxpayer Protection Act. I think that any government and any group of people who sign any document need to be held to it. It is the law in this country. It is a law that we hold very dear. When you put your name and signature on a document, you are bound by it. I can only go back to this government when all of the members with Dalton McGuinty and people in the cabinet signed the taxpayers' protection pledge and appeared with their picture on the front page of the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation pamphlet; you should have abided by that. I'm thankful you didn't, because what you signed was absolutely wrong then and it's absolutely wrong today. At least you've had the good grace to admit that, or have you? I think what you should be saying to everyone is, "We made a mistake." You're not willing to say that, but you should be willing to say, "We made a mistake and we'll not be bound by it," because this was probably the greatest mistake of your government in this term of office.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair, the honourable member from Nipissing.

It's my pleasure to speak tonight on the Respect for Municipalities Act, and what a great title it is. I had the great honour of being a municipal politician in the city of Ottawa for nine years. I was a city councillor for six years and had the pleasure of serving as mayor, following in some of the great shadows of people like Charlotte Whitten, whom everyone fondly remembers, and other notables.

During that time, I had to live through the Harris and Eves administration, which was probably the most disrespectful government toward municipal partners that this province has ever witnessed. The downloading that took place, the changes—I believe there were eight different changes to the property tax and taxation system—created such chaos in the municipal sector for a period of time that really paralyzed so many municipalities around the province, including my municipality of Ottawa. They showed very little respect for municipal officials, day in and day out, with their decisions. It was practically impossible to get a message through to the government of the day to let them know that what they were doing to the local municipality—in my case, Ottawa—was extremely detrimental.

It didn't stop just at the municipal council level. We all remember the number of school boards that were fired. These were democratically elected trustees who were fired by the Harris-Eves government: in Ottawa, the Ottawa Board of Education and my good friend, Lynn Graham, Margaret Lang, two great trustees for the city of Ottawa who were let go. One of the first things that our government did that I was very proud of was to reinstate those trustees, because it was rather galling for a Legislature to come in, swoop down and kick out the men and women who were duly elected at the ballot box by their fellow citizens.

When you look through the litany of challenges that municipalities faced during that previous government, you saw—and this is something that was really quite short-sighted—100% of transit funding was slashed by the Conservative government. They said, "We're out of the transit business." They didn't see the economic or environmental reasons to support public transit. I see Norm Sterling and Bill Murdoch are heckling. They probably haven't been on a bus in the last 30 years. They wouldn't know a TTC or an OC Transpo if it hit them. But they eliminated 100% of the capital funding, and that was why I was so proud, when we were in government, that we brought in the provincial gas tax—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Watson: For those people who are watching this at home—

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Madam Speaker, the braying that you hear across the aisle—I've hit a raw nerve, because when the truth is spoken about your record and your shameful disrespect for municipal governments across the province, you start smarting.

I was there, and I look around this caucus and am proud that so many people here today in the House are

former municipal councillors. Jim Bradley was a municipal councillor in St. Catharines; Madeleine Meilleur, ma collègue qui était élue en 1991 à la ville d'Ottawa et au conseil régional pour la ville de Vanier; my friend Phil McNeely, a very successful councillor in Ottawa—Orléans district; we've got Jim Brownell, who served as the reeve of Cornwall township; Maria Van Bommel, the parliamentary assistant, who was also a municipal councillor; Brad Duguid; Jean-Marc Lalonde, l'ancien maire de Rockland; of course my friend—I call him "His Worship" all the time—the Minister of Labour, who was an extremely successful mayor of St. Thomas; our Minister of Municipal Affairs, who was the longest-serving mayor in Kingston's history and who is serving with us.

I was delighted when our government, in its first budget, started the process of living up to our commitment to the provincial gas tax, where we brought in a gas tax to all public transit organizations. The city of Ottawa, for instance, when the two cents is fully delivered, will see probably about \$35 million coming to OC Transpo to support the public transit system—

Interjection: Every year.

Hon. Mr. Watson: —every single year in base funding. I just want to also point out the fact that our government was the government that brought forward the single largest capital investment in transit in Ottawa's history: a \$200-million partnership with the city, adding \$200 million, plus the federal government at the table putting \$200 million into transit.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Watson: The honourable member across the way says it's tax and spend. That's why we have government, to invest in worthwhile services that the public will appreciate. Public transit is a priority for our community, and that's why I congratulate the city of Ottawa and the Amalgamated Transit Union, which reached a tentative deal so that OC Transpo will be serving the people for the next three years. We congratulate them.

I happen to represent a ward that has a number of very good city councillors. I congratulate my friend Gord Hunter, who celebrated his 25th anniversary as a municipal councillor, Maria McRae and Rick Chiarelli. They too, with the exception of Maria, who is newly elected, lived through the chaos, the ups and downs, the back and forth of the previous government. I have to say that notwithstanding the fact that we have certainly been far from perfect as a government—we've made mistakes—we have treated our municipal partners, and we call them "partners," with respect, because we believe that the men and women who are elected at the local level are just as legitimate as we are at the provincial level or our friends are in the federal government to make decisions to run their municipalities, or in the case of school trustees to run the school boards. The Respect for Municipalities Act is about giving that respect back to the municipalities.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Watson: I have to say, Madam Speaker, you know, the hypocrisy of the Conservative Party is alive and well. John Tory promised no heckling. What

you're hearing across the way is, the cat's away; the rats will play over there. Quite frankly, when the leader's not here, they're heckling. They are really heckling over there. They're not even respecting their own leader. I see why the Conservative Party is having difficulty—

The Acting Speaker: I think we're pretty clear that the word "hypocrisy" is not to be used in the House. I'd ask both members to withdraw the use of the word.

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Hon. Mr. Watson: I'm pleased to withdraw that, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The minister also referred to members of the opposition as rats. Is that parliamentary?

The Acting Speaker: I did not hear that phrase, but I will ask the minister, if he did make that statement, to please withdraw.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Madam Speaker, I withdraw. I apologize to the member.

The fact of the matter is that we all get emotionally charged on this issue. I happened to live through the downloading, I lived through the cuts, the slashing, social housing and land ambulances, and the property tax system, the assessment system, that went through such chaos.

To speak about the assessment system for a moment, I'm glad that the assessment system is being reviewed by the provincial Ombudsman, because there are flaws in the system. I think we have to come up with a better system. Of course, the system was designed eight times by the previous government, and they didn't get it right. That's why I think there's a fair amount of anger in the various municipalities with respect to the assessment system. I look forward to receiving Mr. Marin's report and seeing what we can do as a government to make the system more fair and more transparent, as our finance minister has indicated.

I also want to talk just for a moment about the aspect of this bill with respect to taxation and new revenue streams for the municipalities. I'm very appreciative of the fact that with this bill, we're not going to go down the route of a hotel levy, for instance. The hotel industry in Toronto—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Madam Speaker, I was not heckling when the opposition was speaking. I know I've hit a raw nerve. I know that you're upset about your eight years of history in office and you're ashamed of that period of time, so I appreciate that.

About the hotel industry, let me just say that I'm particularly pleased that the government has said that the destination marketing fee, which has been implemented on a voluntary basis in Toronto, Ottawa and other jurisdictions, is the way to go. I want to commend people in Ottawa, people like Dick Brown, the president of the hoteliers association; Claude Sauvé, from the Château Laurier; John Jarvis, from the Westin; John Constantini; Don Blakeslee; Jacques Burelle, from the tourism authority; and Rod Seiling here in Toronto, who instigated this very successful voluntary levy called a

destination marketing fee. That's the way the hotel industry is marketing itself to the world and bringing in new revenue on a voluntary basis. That's something that I certainly appreciate.

But it doesn't rule out the fact that in the city of Toronto, for instance, under this legislation, we want to give the tools, whether they be revenue or power-making decisions, to the municipal government, the duly elected men and women of the city of Toronto, so that they can make the kinds of decisions that they need to fund the programs and services that they provide for their citizens.

The government, under Minister Gerretsen, has clearly indicated that there will be reviews of the Municipal Act by this Legislature so that we can look at what powers and authorities we can give to other municipalities, because, of course, there's more to Ontario than the city of Toronto. I represent and my colleagues around me represent the city of Ottawa, and we want to make sure that those powers and authorities that should be with a municipality remain there. A great example, for instance: It's ludicrous that you have to go to the provincial government to get permission to put in a speed bump on a street somewhere in your municipality. It's ludicrous that you actually have to go and get the province's permission to change ward boundaries. These are the kinds of decision-making points that really should rest at the local level, empowering those councillors, reeves, mayors and wardens to make those decisions.

One of the things that I'm particularly proud of with this government is the entente that we reached with AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. We now have a mechanism in place, as a government, where we consult on a regular basis with AMO, the association that represents municipal authorities in this province. It's a far cry from the surprise approach that we had to deal with when we were dealing with the previous government.

Let me quote an AMO press release that said, "The Association of Municipalities of Ontario ... welcomes today's introduction of the Respect for Municipal Government Act, a bill that would amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, and promote the principle that municipal governments should be empowered to govern effectively."

What this legislation does for the city of Toronto, and what the future legislation will undoubtedly attempt to address, is ensure that not only is the municipal sector treated with respect, but that it also has the power and tools to ensure that they can do the job properly.

I enjoyed my nine years in municipal government. It is the level of government that is commonly referred to as being the closest to the people, for the simple reason that we could make a range of decisions to serve our fellow citizens.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Watson: The honourable member is stating the fact that I used to be a Conservative; that's not a secret. I was a Conservative. I used to be a Progressive Conservative, but what I saw with the Harris government

was a far cry from the tradition of Bill Davis and Leslie Frost, and what I see at the federal level—that party doesn't represent the progressive side of the Conservative Party.

One of the frustrations I had as a municipal leader in my community was trying to get things done, trying to get our fair share for the city of Ottawa, trying to get our fair share of health care and education dollars. What were we left with at the city of Ottawa? An entire gutting of the transit funding and the capital budget, which was brought back a year or two before the election but, quite frankly, the damage was done. We saw our health care system eviscerated. The Riverside Hospital, which I had the pleasure of serving on, was shut down, the most efficient hospital in eastern Ontario. The Grace hospital was shut down, bulldozed. They tried to close the Montfort Hospital. They tried to close the CHEO cardiac unit. They brought in a supervisor. Talk about Conservative philosophy—this was Big Brother on steroids. It was completely out of control. They were trying to micro-manage everything from Queen's Park.

I am proud of Premier McGuinty and the decisions we've made to invest in municipalities like Ottawa and others in eastern Ontario. Again, I say we've not been perfect in everything we've done, but we've tried to ensure that those partners in the municipal sector have the tools, as they will if this legislation is passed, to ensure that they can make the decisions at the local level without running cap in hand to Queen's Park.

I want to thank those men and women who serve at the municipal level, often for not a whole lot of pay, for long hours. I know that a lot of my former city council colleagues are in the midst of their budget deliberations, and it's a tough budget at the city of Ottawa this year. They're holding public meetings. They're out at shopping malls, in booths, at community fun days and so on, doing their jobs. I think that the very least we should do is ensure that these folks who are duly elected can carry out the duties they've been asked to do on behalf of their communities.

I very much subscribe to a wonderful quote I came across not too long ago by Henrik Ibsen. It talked about my philosophy about community and what our collective responsibility is. Ibsen wrote, "A community is like a ship; everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm." I take my hat off to those councillors, reeves, mayors and wardens for taking the helm to make their community, their neighbourhoods and wards better places to live, work and visit.

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I believe that this bill, if passed, would exempt bills that give municipalities new revenue tools from the requirement to hold a referendum under the Taxpayer Protection Act. We saw the reaction that this received. I remember very vividly Hazel McCallion storming out of an AMO meeting, I believe when the Premier of the day was speaking. It was not just how difficult that was going to prove to be for municipal governments; it was also how disrespectful it was that the previous government at

the provincial level would not have the confidence in those people who put their names on a ballot and put their names on lawn signs. We all know in this chamber that that is a sacrifice to our families, in many cases to our businesses, our livelihoods and our career patterns. In many respects, it is a sacrifice, particularly at the local level, where they're not making a lot of money, especially in the smaller communities. It's not a full-time job.

I hope that we will have the support of a good majority of members in this House. I look forward to continuing this debate, because I think it's important that we bring the municipal perspective here to the table and give the tools to those councils and school boards so that they can, in their own right and their own good judgment, make the decisions for their constituents.

I'm pleased to support this bill. I thank members for their time, and I apologize for the unparliamentary language I used earlier.

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

Mr. Sterling: I think we should clarify that the Progressive Conservative government invested capital in the Ottawa rapid transit bus system. We invested over \$1 billion in that, up to and including 1996-97. At that time, there was a readjustment of the education tax, property tax, and as a result of that readjustment, the municipalities took over the responsibility for financing their transit systems, both in capital and operating. What happened was that we gave municipalities taxing room so they could fill in that gap which was being left by the Ontario government at the time.

I want to say that in addition, the past government, the Mike Harris government, invested over \$200 million in completing Highway 416 from Highway 401 to the Queensway. We improved Highway 417, putting in \$85 million to \$100 million from the Queensway up to Arnprior. We made significant other improvements in the year 2000 millennium fund. We gave the city of Ottawa \$43 million or \$44 million to spend on arterial roads throughout the city. That money was put together with federal and city contributions to do a number of projects, including some transit projects, a couple in my area. It's odd that the provincial share was higher than the combined municipal and federal share.

We put a lot of money into transit in the city of Ottawa. We haven't seen one cent of the \$200 million promised by this present Liberal government in the city of Ottawa.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I just wanted to let the Minister of Health Promotion know that I have 20 minutes in approximately 40 minutes—

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Yay. I'm calling my husband.

Mr. Marchese: Please do—and then I will be attacking his government and their bill vigorously. So if anybody is interested in another opinion in addition to that of our critic for housing, we will offer this critique as best we can to show the duplicitous nature of this bill and so many other things that we want to say about it.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): What time would that be?

Mr. Marchese: In 40 minutes.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me this opportunity to stand up and speak in support of Bill 37. I was listening carefully to the Minister of Health Promotion when he was talking about the intent of the bill. If the bill passes, it will restore democracy. We showed respect to the municipalities across the province of Ontario, the respect having been lost when the Conservative government for the last eight years took all the responsibility and forced all the municipalities, if they wanted to move, if they wanted to do anything, to go back to Queen's Park to micromanage everything. That's why the municipal government was elected by the people, and I think it's ill respect for the electorates who put those people in power—the municipalities, the mayors, the councillors. Give them some kind of authority to move on some issues close to their homes, which they understand more than us here in this place.

I was listening to the Minister of Health Promotion when he was talking about the municipal government and how much they suffered under the past government. Even the Leader of the Opposition, when he was bidding for his leadership, talked about this issue. I was wondering why the member from the opposition is trying to do the opposite right now. Why not follow the steps of your leader, who agreed with us that municipalities should be respected? The municipalities should be respected and given more authority because they know a lot about their own affairs.

I was listening to London council the other day. The person who's in charge of intergovernmental affairs told me these are wonderful steps. We'll give the municipality the authority to move in different directions, which they're supposed to be doing, and also give them some kind of tools so if they want to increase some kind of revenue, they'll be able to do it.

I think this bill is important. I hope everyone in this House will support it because it gives the authority to the people who get elected. That's why I'm supporting it.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I want to thank the Minister of Health Promotion for the rendition of what wasn't in the bill that we're speaking about this evening. I did take note of the comment that he was a former Conservative. I find, I suppose, that when he changed from being a Conservative, it was because he did not feel it important any longer to be able to be true to your word, to live up to the commitments that you make to the people of the province.

This bill is really all about the Premier agreeing on September 11, 2003, that he would adhere to the Taxpayer Protection Act. The Taxpayer Protection Act says that before the province raises taxes that they have the authority to raise, they would have a referendum on it. They went on to say that if they transferred the power of taxation to other bodies such as municipalities, they would hold a referendum prior to making that transfer.

Obviously, he does not feel at this point that that is important.

The minister goes on to speak about the fact that this will not include a hotel levy. I would question the minister where in this bill it speaks of which taxes municipalities will or will not be able to adhere to. It speaks not of taxes at all. The only thing this bill does, Minister, if you had read it, is take away the requirement for the province to hold a referendum before it transfers taxing authority to municipal government. Municipal government today does not have to have a referendum on any tax increases. Of all the ability they have to tax and every area of user fees and taxation, no referendum. The only time it would be required is if the province transfers the ability they don't have to increase taxes because of the Premier's commitment; if they transfer that to municipalities, they must have a referendum to do that. This bill suggests that they no longer have to do that. That's what this is about.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Health Promotion has two minutes in which to respond.

Hon. Mr. Watson: I don't subscribe to the view—and I'm not overly partisan—that everything the Conservative government did was wrong, and everything we do is right. That's the farthest from the truth. I think they did some good things on the other side. But one of the areas that they did not do a very good job with was dealing with municipalities, because I remember very clearly when former Premier Harris, in a famous statement—it was a pinkie swear—said that the downloading was going to be revenue-neutral. My friends in the Conservative caucus do remember that pinkie swear comment; I think the Speaker remembers it. He was the mayor of East York at the time. The pinkie swear was that it was going to be revenue-neutral. I can tell you, one of the years I was mayor, it was a \$24-million download that was nowhere near revenue neutrality.

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We are trying to bring a different attitude in the McGuinty government to dealing with these local governments. These downloading decisions that were taken in the past are still plaguing and haunting the municipal governments of today. So we're trying to give the tools and the resources necessary for legitimate governments, not creatures of the province, as the previous government liked to call municipalities.

I'm very proud of our government's track record on municipal relations and the work that Brad Duguid as parliamentary assistant, Maria Van Bommel and John Gerretsen have done. It's a great team between the rural communities and the urban communities, and with Minister Gerretsen because of his own municipal background and experience.

I thank the members for their comments. I don't happen to agree with the member from Lanark. I think if he talks to anyone who works at OC Transpo he'll realize that because of the decisions taken by the Conservative government to gut transit funding under his administration, we've suffered, and we're now playing catch-up.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased to be able to rise this evening and make a few comments on Bill 37, An Act to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 in relation to municipalities.

Mr. Arthurs: What's the short title?

Mr. Dunlop: The short title is the Respect for Municipalities Act. It's a big bill. I was amazed how much the Minister of Health Promotion read into this bill for a bill that doesn't say anything.

What's interesting is how we, the former government, were insulted so many times by the minister in his comments. I really took offence at the comments asking when the last time was we were on a bus. I don't know whether he was trying to insult us because a lot of us are from rural municipalities and we don't have buses, or whether we're so wealthy that we don't have to travel by bus. The fact of the matter is, I was on a bus less than a month ago. I travelled to Ottawa with a group of people from the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia. We went up to listen to the court hearings at the Ottawa courthouse on the closures that this government has made with the Huronia Regional Centre, the Rideau Regional Centre and the Southwestern regional centre. Of course, that court case will be heard again next Monday and Tuesday in Ottawa, and I plan to try to be in Ottawa for one of those days as well. I'll likely be taking the bus as well to Ottawa.

I also wanted to comment on this Respect for—what is it called?

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: We call it the disrespect, yes. It's the Respect for Municipalities Act, 2005.

It's very, very disappointing. When the minister spoke, he made it sound as if no one on this side of the House had ever been on a municipal council. I can tell you, and I'm very proud of it, that this date in 1980 marks my beginning, 25 years ago tonight, as a member of a municipal council. I was one of those municipal council members who worked for \$1,400 or \$1,500 a year in a village, in a township and all those sorts of things. I'm very proud of my history: 18 years on municipal council in the county of Simcoe. I never lost an election, and I don't suspect I'll lose an election as an MPP as long as you folks are in government. That will be absolutely for sure, because I have a lot of respect for my municipal colleagues as well. In fact—

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): When you downloaded land ambulances, was that a good idea?

Mr. Dunlop: I hear the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of the Environment over there heckling once again, talking about land ambulance.

Let's talk about land ambulance and the respect for municipalities. Let's talk about it. For a government that respects municipalities, I would expect that they would want to work with the municipalities, work with the counties. Well, in 1997-98, when land ambulance was transferred to the counties, there was a 50-50 split. This government has allowed it to slip to 35-65. This year in

the county of Simcoe, they have frozen land ambulance costs. The funding they've allowed to go to the county of Simcoe is now at 35%: 35% is what they've allowed to happen.

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: Isn't it amazing? They're standing over there saying we downloaded it, but you won't fund it. That's the problem. If you funded it, you would fund it at 50%. Land ambulance costs in the county of Simcoe—the number of calls rose 14% last year, and the increase this year to the municipal tax levy—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Perth–Middlesex is having a good time. I think if he wants to make a speech, he should be in his seat.

Please continue.

Mr. Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, when the member from Perth–Middlesex gets up, he'll talk for five minutes, because he's afraid of the bill.

The bottom line here is that this government, the Dalton McGuinty government, is underfunding the county of Simcoe land ambulance by \$3.8 million, and it's going to result in a huge tax increase for the county of Simcoe. They have frozen the land ambulance allocation for the county of Simcoe. It's one of the fastest-growing municipalities in the province, and they've frozen it. They can blame the previous government all they want, but it's a 50-50 deal, and they have not lived up to their portion. Each year it drops further and further back, and now we're at 35-65. If they can do anything today, they can stand up and say, "We will guarantee that the county of Simcoe will be brought up to a 50% allocation." That's all we're asking for.

Of course, we also realize that for any of the new buildings the land ambulance system in the county of Simcoe has had to build, or for any new vehicles, there has been no additional cost, so it's been frozen at 2003 levels, and the county is growing at a rapid rate.

The Minister of Health Promotion talked about the gas tax and how proud he was of the gas tax. I have 11 municipalities in my riding, and only two of them are getting the benefit of the gas tax—only two. All of the people who live in my rural townships are receiving not one penny of the gas tax. They all pay gas tax whenever they go to the pumps. Every individual, whether they've got a truck or a car or whatever they're driving at the current time, pays the gas tax, but those municipalities are receiving not one penny. So if we're respecting municipalities—what this bill is saying—I would think the least we could do is pay a fair share of the gas tax. The fair share should be that every municipality gets money based on per capita. That's all we're asking.

Mr. Wilkinson: What did you give them?

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): We're not the government.

Mr. Dunlop: Yes. That's the other thing.

The county of Simcoe and the Respect for Municipalities Act: I'd like the minister or the government to respond to the leapfrogging effect of the greenbelt

legislation and how it will affect the county of Simcoe. We're seeing additional growth. We're seeing a strong impact on Lake Simcoe and on our lakes and rivers in the county of Simcoe. It will be growing at a more rapid rate, and yet we see absolutely no money going in that direction as well.

Basically, it was a fancy announcement. Minister Gerretsen came up to the county of Simcoe a couple of times and met with all the mayors, deputy mayors, CAOs etc., but we have not seen any indication that there will be any money accompanying the announcement on the greenbelt legislation, and how it will affect those municipalities that will be most dramatically affected by the leapfrogging effect of development.

If we respect municipalities and we want to put a piece of legislation through called the Respect for Municipalities Act, I'd like to get some comments from the government on how they're going to handle the garbage problem. My understanding is that right now this government has absolutely no plans for the city of Toronto's garbage and no plans in a situation where there would be a possible closure of the American border to Toronto garbage. If there was respect, if you really cared about municipalities, wouldn't you think the one thing you'd want to do, instead of putting through this Mickey Mouse bill, is to make sure that for the garbage we produce in the province of Ontario, in the city of Toronto, there was an emergency plan in place and emergency orders available for those municipalities?

I understood in the government's blueprint—did they not say they were going to lower garbage going to landfills by more than 60%? And now it's not happening at all; nothing has changed. Not one thing has changed. They'd be leading us astray if they actually said there was a plan in place. We've seen nothing to indicate that. So we have no plan in place whatsoever to deal with garbage in the province of Ontario. If I'm wrong in that, I'd like someone to quickly go to the research library, come forward with that plan, and show me what they mean by it.

2010

The other thing that comes to mind—in fact, I was interested to see today that Ms. Broten, the Minister of the Environment, brought forward a piece of legislation called the Ontario Clean Water Act. Now, if you actually respect municipalities, I would like to see what type of funding will flow with the Clean Water Act. I suspect there would be hundreds of millions of dollars when you see how it will impact municipalities. So I guess this is going to allow the municipalities to add another tax to the citizens, to the ratepayers, because there will be no money flowing from the Ontario government to back up the Clean Water Act; we know that right now. We've also seen that already in the COMRIF application. What do you have? You have \$238 million allocated, for the money coming from the federal and provincial governments, and \$1.7 billion in applications. That's how much money; yes, \$1.7 billion.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): You guys didn't do anything, Garfield.

Mr. Dunlop: The Minister of Labour is now heckling and he's saying we did nothing. I don't think he ever heard of the SuperBuild program. Maybe you should have applied for it.

Hon. Mr. Peters: Super bust.

Mr. Dunlop: Yes, well, we had a lot of money in our area, and I'll tell you, this COMRIF is a joke compared to what SuperBuild had done for the municipalities. I go back to that—

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: See, here we go, the heckling goes again. We're getting under their skin when we talk about—

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: We'll know in a few days, whenever you make the announcements, how well municipalities will do under COMRIF, and so I hope you're right. I hope that somehow that \$238 million finds its way to some of our ridings, because I can tell you right now, there's a lot of money in under applications. The letter I got from the minister says there was \$1.7 billion in applications under COMRIF and only about \$300 million available. That means a lot of people are going to get turned down; a lot of municipalities are going to be turned down. If you respected municipalities, you would at least have the money on the table to back up their COMRIF applications. That's what I would have to say. I hope I'm right with that and I believe that I am.

Here we go again, this respect for municipalities. What's ironic about this bill, what's actually pathetic about this bill, is that if we follow it back to 2003, when Dalton McGuinty stood in September 2003, and signed the Taxpayer Protection Act, saying he supported referendums for tax increases, he broke that promise within 60 hours of being the Premier; he broke the promise. And now we've had one broken promise after another. It's gotten to be just a broken record of broken promises. And now, here we go with this one as well. Do you think the Premier would have brought forward this bill and talked about that the same day that he signed the Taxpayer Protection Act saying he wouldn't? I don't think he would have. Somehow he hid behind it. He got behind the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and they had a fancy photo op. He had to make sure he wasn't going to raise taxes in his mandate. There would be a referendum. He touted, "I will not raise your taxes. I will not raise your taxes." That's what he said thousands of times on the TV ads, and here we are, the largest broken promises in the history of this province—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Dunlop: The largest, the most broken promises we've ever seen, done by Dalton McGuinty, and now here we come with this itty-bitsy little bill that's going to allow additional taxes for citizens of the province of Ontario and remove the referendum portion of the Taxpayer Protection Act.

What bothers me also is—I wasn't here when the Taxpayer Protection Act was passed, but I do understand that the Liberals actually voted in favour of it. Is that right? Am I wrong in that? All these things they're saying tonight the previous government did wrong—they actually voted in favour of the Taxpayer Protection Act. They were so strong: "We won't raise your taxes. Mike Harris is right on this. The people are right on this." Now, everything Mike Harris did was wrong, according to them tonight, but they're the ones who voted for the act.

Interjection: It's disappointing. I don't even remember—

Mr. Dunlop: It is disappointing when I hear the Minister of Health Promotion, a person I respect a lot in this House, come forward and pretend that they didn't agree with this piece of legislation, that the Liberal Party did not support the Taxpayer Protection Act, when in fact they were the party that voted unanimously in favour of this act. That seems to be a little bit of a—somebody said "hypocrisy" tonight. Wouldn't you call that a little hypocritical?

Here we've got this fancy act coming through. Now the minister is trying—

Hon. Mr. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Having heard the member use the word "hypocrisy," and a previous member being forced to withdraw a similar reference, I just thought my friend might want to withdraw that.

The Acting Speaker: I think the point is well made. The word should be withdrawn.

Mr. Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Tourism is absolutely right. I withdraw the word "hypocrisy" from my comments. I'm trying to think of another word.

All I'm trying to say is, how can the people who are in government today stand and, like the minister did for 20 minutes—and at the end, in the last two minutes of wrap-up, he apologized for saying a few nasty words about us and actually said he was a Conservative and that he supported a lot of the things we did. But through the whole 20-minute speech, he pounded and kicked away at our government. I thought that showed a certain amount of instability. How can a government that supports a piece of legislation as valuable as Bill 37 stand for—how long tonight—20 minutes and beat up the previous government? I would be talking about all the wonderful things that this new government has done, but I can't think of anything. That's the problem: No one can think of anything. So what's the best thing you do? You stand and you slap away at Mike Harris as hard as you can for 20 minutes and talk about all the terrible things that happened.

The bottom line is, in this province today, we're seeing jobs exiting this province very quickly, and that should be a concern of everybody in this House. The Domtar closure just a week ago: Mr. Brownell from that region, Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, actually stood up in the House and sort of apologized, and talked about how hard he was going to work to rebuild those jobs and

that sort of thing. But the bottom line is, they're going quickly. We saw the General Motors announcement last week, which is sad news for the province of Ontario. We're seeing all the pulp and paper mills up north that are being affected dramatically.

So I think the government has a lot of worries on their hands right now. When we look at a piece of legislation like this and at the debate taking place here tonight, and they have to slam the previous government for 20 minutes, that shows they're not very confident in the future of this government. So what they're trying to do is blame other people, including the federal government. We hear about the federal government all the time.

Mr. Murdoch: It's true.

Mr. Dunlop: Yes. So that's what's happening. Blame somebody: Blame the employees, blame the feds, blame Mike Harris, blame Ernie Eves, blame John Tory, but don't take any of the responsibility yourself.

The Respect for Municipalities Act—I will not be supporting this piece of legislation; I can tell you that right now. I will not be supporting it under any purpose. I hope this is a bill that the government has to time-allocate. I'm sure we'll have to time-allocate this bill. Our party will be against it due to the principles we stand for. We thought you had the same principles when you supported the Taxpayer Protection Act in its original passage, and now here we are whittling away at the democratic rights of the citizens of the province of Ontario, giving municipalities the ability to tax even more.

Before the government should pass the bill, I wish they would actually respect municipalities. Start with the land ambulance in the county of Simcoe and boost it up to 50%, where it belongs.

Interjection.

2020

Mr. Dunlop: Well, you know something? Here we go. It's getting under the minister's skin again. All I'm saying to the minister is, you are downloading on the county of Simcoe to the tune of 35-65. If you respected the county of Simcoe, you would stand up in this House today and say we will boost the land ambulance funding to 50%, which they deserve. That's what the county of Simcoe deserves, and if you're going to respect a place like the county of Simcoe, you will boost that land ambulance funding up to where it belongs.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Get a new MPP.

Mr. Dunlop: There are three MPPs up there—

Hon. Mr. Watson: Larry, Curly and Moe.

Mr. Dunlop: There go the insulting statements again. Thanks very much. I really appreciate your comments. You should be proud of yourself, as the Minister of Health Promotion, for that stupid comment.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: Well, no. That's where this government is going. You can't say a word to them that doesn't get under their skin, and then they start throwing insults back at you, name-calling and insults like that. It's a sad day in this House when the Minister of Health Promotion, a minister of the executive council and a minister of

cabinet, has to make stupid comments like that, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity tonight to speak to the disrespect for municipalities act. I hope the citizens of the province of Ontario know what they're trying to do here. This is a government that has flip-flopped once again. They've broken one more promise, the promise of Dalton McGuinty when he said, "I will not raise your taxes." Here we've got a Mickey Mouse bill like this coming in, which just shows the disrespect for municipalities.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Marchese: I want to say that I agree with approximately 35% or 40% of what the member from Simcoe North has said, particularly the attacks on the Liberal government, which are 90% true.

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: I would attack the Conservatives as well, but given that you're in government, with the wheels, we have to properly attack you for the things you're doing.

Hey, look at that. Steve is here. The Tories will introduce Steve in a little while.

I particularly agree with the member from Simcoe North when he talks about the Taxpayer Protection Act, because it's true. There you had McGuinty signing gleefully, happily. I don't know whether the other Liberal members were behind, cheerleading, but that part is true. McGuinty said, "We will not raise your taxes, and if we are likely to, might be inclined to, we're going to have a referendum over it." It's true. I confirm that's what he did.

Of course, what you need to know is that now they're in government, it doesn't really matter. When they break a promise, it's irrelevant. As the good doctor says, "Now that we're in government, we've learned. It doesn't matter what you promise when you are in opposition. When you're in government, it's OK if you break your promises, because we have matured, ripened on the pear tree. As a result, please, electorate, good citizens all, if you do remember our promises, forgive us, but now it's time to move on. We need to look to the future. Don't worry about what we said in the past. All of that is irrelevant. Just sweep it under the carpet, please."

But I'll speak to this in about 10 minutes.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I was listening to the member from Simcoe North. It shows he was certainly not here in 1998 when Mike Harris downloaded \$640 million of services to the municipalities. He referred to land ambulance. They transferred 100% of the ambulance costs to the municipality. We had to go back and negotiate; we got 50%. You reduced personal income taxes. We cannot afford to pay everything back because you caused a big problem. It's too bad. I have to forgive you for not being here at the time.

Also, as to the social housing, I was talking to their leader, John Tory, last week and he told me that he spent the night in the social housing here. He said it's full of cockroaches. Who was responsible for that? Mike

Harris's party at the time, because they had no money for upkeep on the apartments. Today we are going to invest \$734 million to create 15,000 more social housing units.

Again, the ambulance, the COMRIF that he referred to: \$1.7 billion worth of projects, and we only have \$298 million. Why is there so much requirement? It's because the municipalities were forced to borrow long-term loans, debentures, and some of the municipalities have reached the top of their borrowing power.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have to forgive him. He wasn't here when this whole thing happened in 1998. In just my own riding, Prescott–Russell, we were \$24 million short. Again, the member for Simcoe North should look at what happened in 1998.

Mr. Murdoch: It's my privilege to be able to talk here for a few minutes. It seems that every time we have a bill in here, this government forgets they're the government. I cannot believe you people. You've been in government for over two years now and you still haven't figured it out. You know, folks, you've got two years left, and then you may be sitting over here if you're going to be as silly as you are over there now.

You can't go around making these promises: "I will not raise your taxes." That was your big one, and now you're doing it again. You've already done it once, and here you are again. "I will not raise your taxes." Oh, boy. We looked at that on the television and now you're doing it again, another tax grab.

I want to talk about the land ambulance. I don't know where the last speaker was. He must not have been here. Jean-Marc, you must have been up in Quebec City somewhere, because it was 50-50. You guys are the government now. For two years you've been the government. Start living up to the promises. Help them out with their land ambulances. You're not doing that. Maybe in Simcoe—you're not doing it all over Ontario. You people have got to figure out that you're the government. That's your problem. You get over there and you keep forgetting that big promise: "I will not raise your taxes." That was a good one, folks.

And then you talk about this gas tax. That only helped the urban centres. Rural Ontario didn't get any of that money. Where have you been? Where's rural Ontario over there? Have you not got anybody from rural Ontario to speak up in caucus for us? It sure sounds like that. Every time you come up with a bill, you dump on rural Ontario. You forgot about us. You totally forgot about us in rural Ontario. You know something? We even pay taxes there. But you won't raise our taxes, will you? You said, "I will not raise your taxes." I can't believe that promise you made. And here you are with another bill breaking it again. You might want to ask the municipalities if they want this. Folks, "I will not raise your taxes."

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Ça me fait plaisir de parler ce soir sur ce projet de loi, the Respect for Municipalities Act. Like my colleague was saying, what a very good title to this act.

I was in municipal politics from 1991 to 2003. Those were the Dark Ages of municipal politics. Why? Because from 1994, we went through the downloading of provincial government to municipal government. We experienced the downloading of social housing. For Ottawa, it was more than \$8 million. We received these properties in a very, very poor condition. We also had the downloading of part of the social services. Because of the 22% cut—you remember that, I'm sure, in municipal politics—we had to pick up the difference to make sure that people were not out on the street. The ambulance that my colleague from Prescott–Russell spoke about, the highway maintenance—the highways were downloaded to the municipality in a very poor condition, so again we had to pick up that.

I could go on and on and on, but I wanted to speak about my predecessors in municipal politics in Vanier. We've had great, great leaders in Vanier as the mayor. We had Roger Crete; we had Bernard Grandmaître; we had Gisèle Lalonde; we had Guy Cousineau.

My colleagues on the other side of the House will remember Madame Lalonde, because, as my colleague the Minister of Health Promotion was saying, what the past government did was to close the hospital in Ottawa. This lady was able to stand up to them, and that's why the Montfort Hospital is still very well today; they are going to double in size.

2030

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe North has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members for Trinity–Spadina, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the Minister of Culture for their comments in relation to my speech.

What can I say? I'm just going to go back for a moment to what the minister said about potential hospital closings. Right now, I've got 700 jobs in my riding at stake because of this government—700 jobs at the Huronia Regional Centre. So don't stand and talk about closing hospitals when you're impacting communities like Orillia, Smiths Falls and Chatham with the kinds of things that are happening right now—very, very unfair and taking advantage of the most vulnerable people in our society.

To the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, I understand that we did transfer land ambulance at 50% of the cost. That's all the county of Simcoe is asking. The county of Simcoe is asking for the 50%.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Dunlop: They need \$3.8 million. That's all they are asking for. Live up to your commitment. You are letting the land ambulance slide. You talk about all your investments in health care, but you're letting the land ambulance slide. It's as simple as that. Put in \$3.8 million and bring it back up to 50% and I'll shut my mouth. But it's not 50%. That's what I'm saying. It's 35-65. That's what we're talking about here.

I'm going to sum up with one thing. "I will not raise your taxes": Who said it? Does anybody remember who said it? Who signed the Taxpayer Protection Act? Who said it?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Dunlop: And then he turned around and broke a promise 60-some times. The Taxpayer Protection Act has been—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock. Please, order. The member from Simcoe North has the floor. Please continue.

Mr. Dunlop: I can tell you who said that. It was Dalton McGuinty, the guy who is the Premier of Ontario right now. He said, "I will not raise your taxes" and he broke the promise, and he has broken 60-some other promises since he was elected Premier.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Marchese: I just love this exchange between the Liberals and the Tories. They have so much in common. I hope to give some evidence on it in a short while.

I welcome the citizens of Ontario to this parliamentary channel. We are on live. It's 8:33 on Monday night.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Rosie, where's your caucus?

Mr. Marchese: We don't need too many here to beat you up.

This Bill 37 is deliciously constructed in such a Conservative way. Just to explain what I mean to you, it reminds me of what the Tories used to do with their bills. One of the bills that comes to mind—there were so many. They used to call their bills things like the Tenant Protection Act, which didn't really protect the tenants, but the title gave the appearance to people that they were actually protecting tenants. This bill, the Respect for Municipalities Act, reminds me so much of that construct that we all used to love to attack. The Liberals are doing the same. They learned so much from the Tories. They're just applying the same technique, the same machinations around how to construct bills so that people actually believe something has really happened.

Is this bill about respect? I don't think so. The Liberals are looking for a whole lot of cheerleaders in this regard, but we don't happen to be the cheerleaders for the Liberals on this. This bill is not about respect. It's about downloading a responsibility they're unwilling to take, unwilling to assume, and giving it away for free to the city of Toronto. They're giving it away for free.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Rosie, stop attacking Toronto.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, no. The Minister of Health Promotion, whom I like so dearly and love to listen to—I learned so much today. I learned there are so many municipal councillors. He must have spent 10 minutes just describing how many municipal councillors we have on the Liberal benches who were mayors, city councillors—holy cow, they're invested with so much skill and so much experience and so much municipal experience that they've applied all of that concentration of knowledge and power in Bill 37: one little page, and

it's called "respecting municipalities." Understand, it takes more than one mayor to come up with this; it takes a whole lot of mayors, Liberal mayors, to come up with this. And not to be outdone, it takes a whole lot of city councillors, Liberals who are former city councillors, to help construct the brilliance of this bill.

Oh, Duguid, there you are. He's over here. For those of you looking for him, he's normally back here, but he didn't want to be on television yet; but he might come back.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: He went to talk to the good doctor. She has a lot of advice, perhaps on the construct of this bill.

So you understand, it takes a whole lot of Liberal mayors to come up with the brilliance of this toolbox, because I don't think the minister alone, who was a former mayor of Kingston, could have come up with this on his own. I just don't believe it. That's why I think the Minister of Health Promotion named aptly all of these wonderful people they've got, both ministers and not ministers alike, for having helped him with this bill.

So what's in this toolbox? In this toolbox is the ability of the city of Toronto to levy a tax. Understand, the provincial Liberal government doesn't want to increase any taxes any longer, but they're very happy, for free—it won't cost the city a cent—to give them this beautiful toolbox called Bill 37 so they can raise taxes. They say, "It's Christmas and we want to give you something, and we want to give it to you in a pretty little box with a whole lot of tools, and it comes beautifully packaged, and the Minister of Health Promotion says you should like it, you should love it. Don't you respect the city of Toronto? We're giving them a whole toolbox, beautifully packaged."

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: He's saying to me, "Come on, join us, so we can send this package together to the city of Toronto, because they really want the gift."

Mr. Duguid: They want it.

Mr. Marchese: Duguid: "They want it." Don't you love him? Duguid is here now.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: I know. The member from Scarborough West, I think—

Mr. Duguid: Since you came down here, we have grown up as a city. We want those powers.

Mr. Marchese: You've grown up as a city, have you? Yes. The member from Scarborough West, otherwise known as Mr. Duguid—

Interjection: Scarborough Centre.

Mr. Marchese: From Scarborough Centre; I apologize—otherwise known as Mr. Duguid, loves to tell us that the city of Toronto has grown. I have to tell you this: They have been poor under the Tories and they're poor under the Liberals.

Mr. Duguid: No, no.

Mr. Marchese: Protest it, do, member from Scarborough Centre, because that's your job. Your job is to say, "Oh, no, we've introduced the gas tax, and they

ought not to be poor any more with that gas tax that we give them.” And not only that; now we have a toolbox, Bill 37, constructed by the member from Scarborough Centre and other mayors and city councillors, to give them the extra help they need. I love it when I hear mon ami from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. He says, “I was here in 1990.” So was I. And I’m here in 2005, and not much has changed. Not much has changed, mon ami. I agree with you that they downloaded a whole lot of programs to the cities—not just the city of Toronto but all of the cities. That’s why now, cumulatively, they all have a \$3-billion deficit, but mon ami the Minister of Labour—

Hon. Mr. Peters: The social contract, it provided \$800,000—

Mr. Marchese: The Minister of Labour is making a contribution. That’s OK; that’s our job. He’s reminding us about when we were in government. All I want to tell you is I was here in 1990 and then I was here in 1995 when they got into power, when they started the series that way, and I’m here now, in 2003-04-05, and I’m trying to understand what it is that you people, Liberals, are doing to help the city of Toronto and other cities. The gas tax? OK. And now—

Mr. Duguid: A billion dollars in capital.

2040

Mr. Marchese: Come on, member from Scarborough Centre. These guys talk about, what do you call it, their SuperBuild. It’s all the same baloney, I tell you. I am saying to you that the cities are as much in trouble aujourd’hui as they were then.

You can take pride in the little pennies you sent along. You say, “Oh, come on. The gas tax—you have to acknowledge that with all that money, we saved all the cities.” The city of Toronto alone is in serious debt. It has an operating shortfall of \$300 million annually and has been deferring \$200 million per year in capital expenses as well. That’s the city of Toronto alone, just to speak to that.

Mr. Duguid: Stand up for your city.

Mr. Marchese: No, Duguid, I’m asking you to stand up, because you’ve got the parliamentary wheels. You’ve got to go to your minister and say, “Minister, we’ve got to deliver for the city of Toronto, because I’m a former city of Toronto kind of guy, and I really want to help them.” No, Duguid, you’re in charge. You’ve got the bus and the wheels, and you also have the money to help the city of Toronto, for which you served. Don’t tell me what I should do; I’m telling you what you should do. What I’m saying to you, Minister, parliamentary assistants and all those wonderful members who were at one time Liberal mayors, this little contract ain’t helping much. What you are doing is downloading your responsibility and your unwillingness to tax and giving that power to the city so they can tax.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Minister of Culture, what are you saying? That’s what your bill does. You’re a former city council member and you know, and if you don’t, we’ve

got a problemo on our hands. Didn’t you help with the bill? Come on.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Don’t say no. Your bill allows the city of Toronto to tax.

You call that a toolbox. Oh, I can’t wait. I would have loved to have seen the member from Scarborough Centre, otherwise known as Mr. Duguid, in the city of Toronto and to have said to Premier McGuinty, “Thank you, Premier, for our ability to tax. Now we’re going to be able to go and tax alcohol, maybe tax cigarettes, and maybe tax”—God knows; what else can they tax?—“entertainment events. We’re so happy you allowed us to do this because we really were looking forward to being able to tax entertainment, alcohol. We want to tax cigarettes. Oh, we just love that power, because we want people to come and say to us, ‘Thank you, Duguid, for increasing our cigarette taxes and thank you, Duguid, for increasing our alcohol taxes and thank you, Minister of Municipal Affairs, for allowing us to increase our’”—what else did I miss?—“entertainment events.” They’re going to love you, member from Scarborough Centre; they’re going to just love you to death. You’re going to be able to go to the city and say, “You can tax entertainment events, tax cigarettes,” and they’re going to love you. That’s the power that Duguid is giving them.

I don’t want to pick on you alone. I’m picking on all the other former fine mayors. I’m not just going after you, you understand. Nothing personal. I’m just going after all the Liberal cabinet members and the others who are cheering along this beautiful toolbox.

Mon ami from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell talks about social housing and then attacks Mr. Tory for going into the buildings and finding cockroaches. God, if only there were just cockroaches that he found. But he may have found dilapidated buildings and people living in squalor, which is true and, I daresay, caused by the Conservative government—true. We were all hoping, parliamentary assistant, that you guys would come in and fix it all.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I’ll bet you were.

Mr. Marchese: Eh, doctor? You were hoping too, and I bet in your own mind you said, “My God. How are we ever going to deliver on these promises? Hopefully, we’ll mature on the tree in time to be able to ask for forgiveness.” I know with your tools of psychology, you’ll be able to work with your constituents in Hamilton to convince them that you’ve ripened, matured, and while on that vine you forgot all the other problems when you were green. I understand.

I had hoped that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell would say, “Yes, Tories were the culprits, but we Liberals fixed it.” You got my friend from Beaches–East York asking two questions in this House about the Toronto Community Housing Corp. They are holding a deficit of \$220 million, looking desperately to you, Liberals, the ones who in 2003 said, “We’re going to increase services and fix everything,” looking to you to send the money to get rid of the cockroaches and fix the buildings so people don’t live in squalor. He didn’t

say, "We've got the money for you." He didn't. When the member from Beaches–East York asked the Minister of Housing, "Where is the money?" he said, "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." In the end, what you know is, there is no money.

Is that correct, Michael? Did you get any? Maybe he wrote you a different answer, saying, "I have to give blah, blah, blah in the House, but here is the real answer." You didn't get a note, eh? I didn't think you did. The Minister of Housing is all, "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," but the cockroaches are still there and the buildings are falling apart and young people are living in squalor, wanting desperately to get out, causing them to get involved in so much activity that is unpleasant, some of it criminal. We believe that if you fix some of those buildings, they might decide that, "Maybe living here isn't so bad after all, and maybe we could focus on our education." But you still leave those young people living in squalor today, and you do nothing. All you can do is blame Mr. Tory for going in the building and attacking you for what his former government did, and you do nothing on your own to fix the buildings. You smile, some of you, as you say that. But it's not just people becoming cynical; I'm becoming cynical after 15 years.

Mr. Parsons: No, never.

Mr. Marchese: No, I am. I'm getting so cynical; I'm getting sick of politics in this place. Because it's true, people don't believe us any more. Promises don't mean anything any more. The only ones who can promise everything and get away with it are the Liberals.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Give me a break. You guys promised everything all the time.

Mr. Marchese: Mr. Milloy is contributing again, that we promised everything all the time. Smitherman today, in response to our leader, when he talked about the fact that we're missing public health officers in so many parts of our province, said, "Ah, New Democrats. You guys like to spend. That's not the way we do it." But it didn't prevent him or your leader, the Premier, when he was in opposition and before the election of 2003, promising everything to everyone. He told them, "Believe in magic. We will increase your services and we won't increase your taxes. We will spend and spend and spend," because the magic wand worked before 2003. Since they got elected, the magic wand on that mature pear tree doesn't work any more.

Mr. Milloy: That's what Bob Rae said.

Mr. Marchese: The parliamentary assistant to environment said, "That's what Bob Rae said." You would think that the parliamentary assistant would have learned something from previous governments. You'd think they would have learned something. Yet they learn nothing, each and every time. We have downloaded to the city so much.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Read your leader's book.

Mr. Marchese: Jimmy, we are one of the jurisdictions in the world—in Canada in particular, but in the world—where housing has been downloaded to the municipalities. The Tories did that. I thought Duguid, the member

from Scarborough Centre, would come here and say, "We Liberals are going to lift it up again, we're going to take it out of the property tax base."

Did you ever hear the member from Scarborough Centre say, "We're going to do that"? No, no, no. Did you ever hear the parliamentary assistant for the environment say that? No. Gerretsen, all these fine mayors who are in the Liberal benches, did you ever hear them say, "We're going to lift up housing so that it gets paid from the income tax system"? Did you ever hear that? Speaker, just say yes or no. No, you didn't, because I haven't heard them say that. We, the property taxpayers and tenants and businesses, are paying for so much. They're paying for public health, \$264 million. The member from Beaches–East York mentioned this as well: ambulance, \$312 million in the city of Toronto alone; social assistance, \$1.33 billion. It comes out of property taxes—not the income taxes, but out of property taxes. I would have thought all of these fine Liberal former mayors and city councillors, with all that vast expertise and experience, would come here and say, "Some of it is going to be lifted up, and soon." Nada, from anyone. We have seniors services at \$240 million, child care at \$193 million, social housing at \$879 million, out of the property tax base, and transportation is virtually being paid by the cities alone.

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All I'm saying to you is that it's how we tax. I don't think you got anybody on anything. It's how we tax. What we are arguing is that some of this should come out of income tax. Your money is \$50 million or so that the city of Toronto might get as a result of taxing people, in the area of \$50 million. If you want to give them \$50 million, get it out of your income tax base, provincial consolidated revenues, get it out of your PST money, but don't force the city of Toronto to go and tax cigarettes again or entertainment events or alcohol. Don't do that, because the ones who will take the beating are the city councillors, not you, and you know it. That's not respect for city councillors and that's not respect for the city of Toronto. That's not what this bill does.

Even the Toronto Star, which is normally a supporter of much of what you people do, says, "To prosper, Toronto and Canada's other large urban centres must be freed from their unhealthy dependence on property tax. They must be granted a share of income taxes or consumption taxes." I agree with that. The cities need help. Eighty per cent of all the people now live in cities. They need help. They are economic engines. As you go after the federal government for not giving you enough money, the city is coming after you for not giving them enough money, and the pecking order goes on and on. You want to attack your Liberal friends federally and the city is attacking you for not delivering the support they need. They're not joining with you. They're saying, "Give us the income tax money. You tax. We don't want to."

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, no, Madam Minister? We'll see how happy the former colleagues of Mr. Duguid from Scarborough Centre are going to be when they get this beautiful toolbox constructed by so many good Liberals. We're going to see how much they're going to love that. I don't think they're going to like it too much.

Mr. Wilkinson: It's up to them.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, it's up to them.

I say to you that you should have kept many of your promises. You haven't been able to. People will not forgive you. I won't, that's for sure. What I am saying to you tonight on this bill is that it's not about respect for the city of Toronto.

Mr. Wilkinson: You're not going to vote for it?

Mr. Marchese: I won't vote for this bill. I can tell you that today. I can tell you that today with pride and conviction.

The Acting Speaker: Before we go to questions and comments, I would like to recognize Mr. Steve Gilchrist, the former member from Scarborough East, I believe, in the 36th and 37th Parliaments.

The Minister of Health Promotion?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I always enjoy following the honourable member from Trinity–Spadina. He's quite a character, very entertaining. My mother even watches him on television and a lot of the interesting things he says.

But I can tell you why the NDP are pushing for more money in the witness protection plan: because after their five years in office, they can't go around this province unless it's in deep undercover, because what they did to this province and what they did to the municipalities with the social contract and with their financial mismanagement and chaos was disgraceful.

The fact of the matter is that it's sad. I think Rosie is normally a pretty good defender of Toronto, but I don't think the city council and Mayor Miller are going to be particularly pleased with his statement that he is not going to support this particular piece of legislation, the Respect for Municipalities Act. This is all about strengthening Toronto, because when we have a strong Toronto, we have a strong Ontario. It's sad, really. The NDP have now relegated themselves to a shadow of their former selves. They were the once great, proud party of people like Stephen Lewis and great men of principle like Mr. MacDonald and Bob Rae, but now they have chosen to say that because the Liberal government had the fortitude to bring forward a piece of legislation to say we want to support the city of Toronto, we want to support municipalities like Ottawa and others around the province, for what can only be described as partisan reasons they're saying, "No, we're not going to vote for this." I would ask the honourable member and the member who is in the chair, who is a former mayor himself, to think long and hard about the importance of making sure that Toronto has the tools necessary so it can properly govern itself and properly create the economic growth that all of Ontario benefits from.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I listened intently. In fact, I returned to the House because the member from Trinity–Spadina basically said it all. He said the Liberals promised everything. That's the unveiling of the truth here this evening. This is clearly downloading the ability to raise taxes without taking responsibility. If you look at this bill, it's actually half a page, because it's in both languages. The most pertinent clause here is, "A referendum is not required for the purposes of subsection 3(1) with respect to a bill that gives a municipality the authority to levy a new tax." That's the clear message here. They're trying to slip it through in the darkness of night, in the last few sessional days of the Legislature.

But I look at this whole thing and I think all of us remember the Premier—and I say this respectfully—leaning up against a tree in a sort of shadowy night promising, "I will not raise your taxes." Remember? It was played over and over again. It's like the member from Trinity–Spadina said. He said they promised everything. Now they're in a bind. They understand that. They're failing at almost every turn—231 promises, most of them broken, and more to be broken, I would say. But I will say this: Remember the election logo, "Choose change"? Actually, they're choosing your loose change. Because what they're actually doing is they've raised your taxes about \$2,000 per person—

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: The member from Niagara Falls always has the pertinent snide remarks, and he's such a rude member. He's a person who should remember the day he crossed the floor to beat up Cam Jackson. Do you remember that? So keep your comments to yourself, Mr. Bradley. I'm so upset.

That's the treachery that you're dealing with. Here's a government that tells you one thing during the election and does something totally different after the election.

Mr. Parsons: I have great difficulty taking from that side what I just heard. I recall very vividly two weeks before the election in 2003, that party, when they were government, making public statements that their budget was balanced. Granted, it was a false budget from square one, held in an auto parts manufacturer, but they looked straight in the camera and said that. The problem was we believed that some of what you said was correct, and it turned out it was so far from balanced that it threw everything out of whack. So don't give me a lecture on information being transmitted, because that was absolutely erroneous.

The member for Trinity–Spadina referred to a toolbox. I think back with great delight to when our Premier was in opposition and the Conservative government at that time presented a toolbox to help municipalities, and our leader said, "The problem is when the only tool in the toolbox is a hammer, pretty soon every problem looks like a nail." That was their approach to it.

This legislation truly contains components that will help. As I hear the member from Trinity–Spadina say that municipalities are against it, I would like to quote to you from an AMO press release on November 28, 2005—

that's not very long ago: "The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) welcomes today's introduction of the Respect for Municipal Government Act, a bill that would amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, and promote the principle that municipal governments should be empowered to govern effectively." That is because this was not foisted on them; they were consulted, and they support it.

If we look at Toronto, Toronto is larger than some entire countries in the world. Of course we respect them, and we respect the need that they have to make individual decisions for it.

Mr. Hardeman: First of all, I want to say in comment to the last speaker, I can't believe that he would stand up there and say that people were foolish to believe the Liberal promises because they had no intention of keeping them.

I want to comment on the member from Trinity–Spadina.

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Mr. Parsons: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I did not say that. I said they were foolish to believe.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Parsons: Yes, but I got it into Hansard. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: You got it into Hansard.

The member for Oxford.

Mr. Hardeman: You can say it one minute and deny it the next.

I wanted to speak to the member for Trinity–Spadina and totally agree with him. We've heard a lot of discussion about this bill, but this bill has nothing to do with what the title says. It is disrespect for taxpayers, not respect for municipalities. It really doesn't give municipalities any extra power. The power to raise their taxes as they deem appropriate presently exists in legislation. They don't need referendums for that. What they need a referendum for: The province needs a referendum if they are going to download their taxing authority to municipalities. For what the province presently charges taxes, the way they charge them, if they're going to pass that to municipalities, they need that referendum. This bill avoids that. That's why it's part of the Taxpayer Protection Act. There is nothing in the Taxpayer Protection Act that refers to municipalities, only to the provincial government. They have to have a referendum if they pass this authority to municipalities.

As they've mentioned so often, they have passed some of the tax dollars from gasoline to municipalities. That didn't require a referendum because they didn't increase taxes to do it. They passed their resources to municipalities. That was respect for municipalities. But giving municipalities the authority to charge taxes beyond what the province already does is not respect for anyone. It's a way of getting past the Premier's comment, "I will not raise your taxes." That's what the Premier said. That's what he's trying to avoid now. He is trying to point out that he is not breaking the rules, because he's giving to it municipalities. He is breaking his promise to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Trinity–Spadina has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Marchese: I thank all of the participants, and would address my remarks mostly to the Minister of Health Promotion, because he uses the word "fortitude." He says it takes fortitude to introduce this so very imaginative toolbox that was constructed by so many former mayors and city councillors, now Liberal MPPs. I've got to tell you that passing a bill that passes to a city the ability to tax is easy. It's not fortitude. I don't understand how he could construct it thus. How is it fortitude to say to the city, "OK, you can tax"? Does that take strength? What takes strength, Minister of Health Promotion, is your taking responsibility as a minister and convincing the other members who are cabinet ministers to increase the support to cities by allowing cities to get their fair share of your money that you collect through income taxes and the PST.

The member from Beaches–East York, Rosario Marchese from Trinity–Spadina and the former member from Toronto–Danforth are strong defenders of the city of Toronto. I'll tell you that Rosario Marchese is not going to support this bill, constructed by former city councillors and other mayors, because this passes the buck. This says to the city of Toronto, "You can tax so you can take the blame, because we Liberals, so intelligent, are unwilling to do it ourselves. We want to give you the Christmas present: to have a toolbox so you can tax and you get the blame." Sorry; you're not going to fool too many people and you're not going to get Marchese to support you on that. I can guarantee it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Lalonde: I'm extremely pleased to be able to speak on this very important bill, which will correct the mistake and the fiasco done by the previous government. We want to give back to municipalities the power to administer, as my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex said. It takes about eight years to correct what has been done by the previous government.

Comme nous disons en français, nous sommes là à réparer les pots cassés qui étaient causés par l'ancien gouvernement, et ceci coûte parfois très, très cher et demande un sacrifice du gouvernement.

As the previous speaker from Ottawa–Nepean said, my wife is also delighted when the member from Spadina gets up in the evening. She says, "He is the man I like to watch." I always thought I could tell her he is a Liberal, but he's sitting on the wrong side, so I said, "He's right next to the Liberal members."

Anyway, I just wanted to say that what was caused by the previous government has had a major effect on the whole of the province. I was just reading yesterday a publication called Canada Volunteerism Initiative. Let me tell you, ever since that government did not allow the municipalities to increase taxes over the cost of living, it has created some problems. Ontario has the second-lowest volunteerism rate in the country; also, volunteering has decreased by 7% in Ontario. That is an awful lot. I was looking a little further. In 2003, 63% of Ontario

organizations found it harder to recruit volunteers than it used to be in 1997. Why? It is because at the present time municipalities don't have the money they used to have to build or maintain facilities. They have closed some recreation centres. We have had closures of schools in the past that we are trying to keep open.

We are spending what we have available to respond to immediate needs. Just in Prescott and Russell, for example, when they downloaded Highway 17—71 kilometres—do you know how much it's costing the municipality? It's \$600,000 a year just in maintenance costs. That \$600,000 is not there for the upkeep of our equipment or to look after social housing.

There are many cases we could refer to, but today this Bill 37, as I said, will correct the mistakes made by the previous government. As to the previous bill that was passed, first reading was done on June 17, 2002, by the former Minister of Finance, Mrs. Janet Ecker. I remember, in 2003, the AMO conference at the Royal York; the AMO conference has about 1,500 delegates. When Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga, went to the mike, she spoke straight to the members who were Progressive Conservatives. She said to them, "You will not be re-elected in October 2003 because of what you have done to the municipalities. It will take years to put back in place what we used to have." When Hazel spoke at the mike, I'm telling you, you could have heard a mouse running across the hall. The whole panel we had there was so quiet. I think they were trying to find a door at the back of the stage so they could squeeze out, because they couldn't face anyone.

I remember, just lately, during the AMO conference this year, I was there when the member for Lanark-Carleton met the Minister of Transportation, Harinder Takhar. The former Minister of Transportation said, "We know we downloaded the roads, but it's up to you to upload it." This was the former Minister of Transportation saying that.

Anyway, they spoke a lot about our saying we would not raise taxes. We said it many times, but how many times did you people say you had balanced the books? Even a couple of days before the election: "We have balanced the books." We got a big surprise of \$5.6 billion in the red. This is why—we could call it a tax but we got what we call the health tax, which will generate this year \$2.6 billion.

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Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: Billion.

Mr. Lalonde: Billion, exactly: \$2.6 billion. Do you know what we are going to do with this bill? We are reducing the waiting time in hospitals, we have created more space in universities to develop more doctors, we have added MRIs in hospitals. You will see a year from now—we could say immediately; you can look at the stats, and you will see how much the time has been reduced to replace a hip or knees or do cataract surgery at the present time. This is why, when you people are saying, "We will cut down that health tax"—what are you going to do, cut more services like you have done?

I remember when we had this downloading, the minister, the member for Oxford—Oxford? Are you from Oxford, Ernie?

Mr. Hardeman: Oxford.

Mr. Lalonde: Oxford. I remember: He was sitting on this side, and I was over there, and I was doing all the calculations to find out how much downloading you had done—I found the sheet today. You came across and you told me, "Jean-Marc, are you preparing your hockey budget?" I said, "No, I'm trying to figure out what the mistake is in the fiasco that you have caused for the municipalities." I was correct.

Further to that, and I want to make sure that everybody listened to that, you people had said that 100% of the nursing home costs would be downloaded to the municipalities. Then it came down to 50%. I went to your office, Mr. Hardeman, and I said, "Do you know that a nursing home doesn't necessarily accommodate the local people?" It's like an industry in a community, because I was looking at them in my area. I have 11 nursing homes in my riding, a total of 52 nursing/senior citizens, and I visit every one of them, not only in the nursing homes, but every patient and resident. I have over 2,100, and I will be visiting them as of this Friday, starting at the Chateau Gardens in Lancaster.

People were saying to me, "Mr. Lalonde, when are you going to do something for us? We need additional beds. We need some renovation in the nursing home" or the senior citizens' home. We took this into consideration immediately. We have purchased—how many lift beds? I forget how many we got, but we responded immediately. But again, we operate a very tight budget at the present time. The deficit that was forecast for this year is going to be way lower than predicted, because we have good administration. The previous government, I would say, had done what people were telling me: They must have mismanaged their budget in the past because of the deficit they left us with.

I said a little while ago that the leader of the official opposition, John Tory, had gone to see some social housing last week, and he did recognize immediately that they need some money to fix up those social housing units, because the place was full of cockroaches. He said, "That was along the Don Valley Parkway. You couldn't sleep with your window open because of the noise of the traffic, first of all, and secondly, there was no difference between closing the windows or having them open, because there's no heat in the place." Really, again, it's because of the downloading, and also this government has not allowed the municipalities to increase taxes with their Bill 109 that was called the Keeping the Promise for Growth and Prosperity Act, 2002. That was the bill. Today, this is why we're trying to say to the people that the Tories, the official opposition, made a mistake, and we have to correct that as soon as possible so the people can manage.

Again, in my own area, Upper Canada College—a school—came to me. They said, "We need \$454 million to fix our school." At one time, school boards had full

control to increase or decrease taxes. Today, they lost that power because the former government said, "We will decide if you are going to increase. If you want to increase the taxes, you have to pass a referendum." So I think it's very important that we do proceed with this if possible.

Another thing that we have done—when I said a little while ago that we're losing volunteerism in Ontario, our government said last June that we will invest \$20 million to have all schools accessible to non-profit organizations that want to use the facility for meeting, and try to get the volunteer people back in to help the community.

I think I've covered quite a few of the items that I wanted to speak about. But when they referred to COMRIF a little while ago, \$1.6 billion will be required, and 80% of that—it is \$1.7 billion—is from municipalities of 25,000 or less. It just shows you, municipalities could not increase taxes to fix their roads, to fix sewers, water, community centres. They have no money. So what some of the municipalities have done is they've decided to borrow the money, and they have reached their cap. Their borrowing power is up to their limit. So right now they would like to have money from COMRIF. In my own area alone, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, the COMRIF application is \$44.5 million. I know there won't be much money. That's 15% of all the money that is made available for the whole province. So there will be a lot of municipalities that will be disappointed. But I will say, let's blame the previous government. This is why we don't have the money to fix them, because they dragged their feet so long, they didn't give us the money, they didn't allow the municipalities to increase—I'm not afraid to say it. The last two years, when I was mayor of the town of Rockland—I was mayor for 15 years—I increased taxes by 11%, just a few months before the elections. I was re-elected, because they knew that I had to fix the roads and build what was needed for the community. So the people understood. The previous government was saying, "No, you cannot increase your taxes to respond to the needs of the community."

Thank you. It has been a pleasure.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr. Sterling: I'm responding because I was mentioned in the remarks of the member. We did have a meeting with the minister, and I also told the member that part of our platform in the last election was to help out rural municipalities with regard to all of their roads, not only roads that had been transferred to municipalities. We were going to undertake the responsibility for all of the bridges, because the bridges are the biggest part of rural road maintenance. That was our plan.

This government, other than complaining about what we did, has not come up with any kind of response, particularly for rural municipalities. In fact, they have insulted rural municipalities, because they gave all of the gas tax to the urban municipalities. So the problem, if anything, has been exacerbated by their transfer of resources to urban municipalities while not responding to any of the needs of rural municipalities.

I invite the member, if he doesn't like what our government did—and this is the tenor of all the speeches—just change it. Just change it. You're the government. You don't understand you're the government. If you are complaining about downloading of roads, upload them. If you don't like 50% funding for ambulances, or 35% funding for ambulances, which it has now sunk to, from our government—you're worse than us with regard to the ambulances—then take it all back. You're in charge. Take control. People want you to govern. Govern.

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Mr. Marchese: With all due respect to my friend from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, he talks about how the Liberals didn't quite know what kind of mess they were getting into when they got elected. I have to remind him that Gerry Phillips, now the Minister of Government Services, was fully aware of the kinds of problems we were facing. We were aware, and we predicted a \$4-billion deficit. Mr. Phillips, now the Minister of Government Services, knew there was a \$5-billion "risk," he called it, a delicate term for a deficit. It's interesting that you all plead ignorance, but please, you all know. You're big boys and big women in terms of your knowledge of politics. I have to tell you, I can't accept ignorance on your part.

Secondly, you say you're here to repair the damage done by the Conservative government. I just don't see it. According to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, municipalities of Ontario subsidize the provincial treasury to the tune of \$3 billion annually. They're all in debt. They're all in debt subsidizing the provincial Liberal government. The city of Toronto has a \$500-million problem, I think \$200 million in operating and \$300 million in capital. That's \$500 million. They're subsidizing you. While you cry about what the federal government isn't doing for you, you're not helping the cities at all. This bill doesn't do anything except allow the city to tax. If they do tax, they're going to get whacked and the citizens are going to get whacked, and all they can do even then is raise \$50 million. They're still in debt, and it's serious. You're not helping at all.

Mr. Ramal: Thank you for the chance to speak in support of Bill 37. I was listening to my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell when he was talking about the intent and the logic behind the bill, why our government is introducing this bill. He outlined it very well. He explained that, as a result of downloading from the past government on to the municipalities, they were hurt badly. We heard many mayors, many elected officials from municipalities and communities across the province, talking about the download, how much they were hurt in the eight years under the Conservative government.

But tonight I was surprised when I was listening to my friend from Trinity–Spadina. Like my friend and many people in this place, I love to listen to him, but for some reason today his position changed. Maybe he is following in the steps of his leader in the federal government and is now forming some kind of pact or coalition with the Conservatives—

Hon. Mr. Watson: And separatists.

Mr. Ramal: Yes, separatists too. I was especially hurt when I was reading the paper today: "Not Opposed to Private Health Care, Layton Says." I was so disturbed about how the NDP changed their position. Maybe my friend from Trinity–Spadina followed that life-changing stuff. Rosie, I believe in you. You are a fair man. I don't know what happened to you today. I don't know what happened. You are going against the municipalities—what got into you?—against Toronto, against David Miller, against the councillors who represent Trinity–Spadina. Why, Rosie? We believe in you. You're a fair man.

We believe we should respect those people who got elected like us. We should give them respect and authority, because they were also elected by the people to represent them, to do these things for them.

Mr. Hardeman: I'm happy to rise and speak for a few moments to the comments made by Jean-Marc Lalonde of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. First of all, I want to say how disappointed I am that he would refer to a document he was holding that somehow suggested I had agreed that there was a discrepancy in the figure, that the municipality was not getting as much as they were deserving. I'm sure he may have shown me a document at some point in time, but I can assure you that I have never agreed that the discrepancies he spoke of were there.

I do want to say that it goes deeper than that. I'm sure the member opposite would know that the home for the aged in municipalities has always been funded by municipalities and the province pays per resident in the home for the aged, the same as they pay for all private sector homes for the aged or what they call long-term-care facilities. Of course, the municipal ones are called homes for the aged. The readjustment of finances never had anything to do with the homes for the aged. They were never involved in the transfer of responsibilities.

What I think is really important to recognize in his comments is that he referred to the provincial need for more dollars because they found themselves in financial constraints when they became government. This bill has absolutely nothing to do with those constraints. This bill has to do with allowing municipalities to charge, in those areas that the province is presently responsible for—the municipalities are now allowed to raise taxes in other areas to help fund their needs. Those needs have not

changed since the last election. They may have gone up—inflationary—but their responsibilities have not changed.

If the government deems that they need to change how municipalities are funded, they might want to consider taking off the responsibility on the property tax for half the cost of education. That would help municipalities. That would not require the Premier's breaking his promise of not increasing taxes and would not require changing the Taxpayer Protection Act to protect the taxpayers of this province.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Lalonde: First of all, I want to thank the members from Lanark–Carleton, Trinity–Spadina, London–Fanshawe and Oxford for their comments.

I would like to comment on some of the issues mentioned by the member from Lanark–Carleton. Definitely, 4,864 kilometres of road were downloaded to municipalities. But I'm surprised that Highway 15 was not transferred. Why? Probably because this was in his riding; probably a good move on his part, but not for the taxpayers.

I'd like to come back to the member for Oxford's comments. Definitely, the previous government in 1998 wanted to download 50% of the nursing home costs to the municipalities. At the present time, nursing homes receive between \$117 and \$127 a day for each patient. But when you talk about homes for the aged, it's completely different: The government is paying 80% of the \$41 that the municipality has to pay to the owners. I want to make sure you understand this: Nursing homes are fully paid by the province; homes for the aged only 80% by the province. I just want to make sure you're aware of this.

I wish I'd been on the government side in 1998, because Highway 17 never would have been transferred. According to a law in 1966, Highway 17 has to remain a provincial highway.

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for accusing me of keeping those highways in the provincial sphere. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: It's not a point of order but you've snuck it in.

It now being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Bramalea–Gore–Malton– Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest–Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Huron–Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Chatham–Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement t	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Lanark–Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Dufferin–Peel– Wellington–Grey	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Leeds–Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Eglinton–Lawrence	Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Elgin–Middlesex–London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	London–Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Erie–Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Niagara Falls	Craitor, Kim (L)	St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay–Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Parkdale–High Park	Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Waterloo–Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Cordiano, Hon. / L'hon. Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Nepean–Carleton	Vacant
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Toronto–Danforth	Vacant
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse	Whitby–Ajax	Vacant
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		

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

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

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