

# RE: BILL 81 (4-YEAR TERM)

committee. Respectfully to Mr. Walker, if he wasn't, I'm certainly not prepared to entertain additional deputants who, at the very least, didn't have their names submitted as potential deputants.

**Mr. Hudak:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair: If there are other members here—I recognize a lot of staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, my friends from the days of the greenbelt and such, other staff from the PC and NDP offices who have been here and members of the press—who have asked to come before the committee and were denied, I'd entertain them presenting as well. But I know Councillor Walker is an experienced city of Toronto councillor. He feels very strongly about this legislation, and he's been patient enough to be here. So in the absence of Ms. Ambler, I would strongly suggest that Councillor Walker be given that opportunity. If there are others on the list who are here right now, bring them forward as well.

**The Chair:** For the committee, the 11:30 presentation has not cancelled. They've indicated that they are trying to arrive here through traffic, so we will recess until five to 12.

*The committee recessed from 1135 to 1149.*

**The Chair:** The committee will now reconvene. The 11:30 deputant has not arrived. Mr. Hudak, do you want to make a suggestion before the committee?

**Mr. Hudak:** I recommend that Councillor Walker, who was on the list as an alternate, now proceed and make a presentation.

**The Chair:** We are under time constraints. First of all, some may want to vote before 12, should there be a vote. As well, we cannot go past 12. Do you have a recommended time that the person may speak? Three minutes?

**Mr. Hudak:** It was Mr. Prue's turn for questions.

**Mr. Prue:** I don't need to ask questions, but we can give him the seven minutes that I have until 12 o'clock. I don't know whether we need to do anything right at 12.

**Mr. Hudak:** The standing order goes until 12.

**Mr. Prue:** So we give him seven minutes.

**The Chair:** We can't anticipate that there would be a vote, but members should be allowed to vote, should that happen.

**Mr. Prue:** If there's a necessity for a vote, but failing that, that he go until one second to 12.

**Mr. Arthurs:** Fine.

**The Chair:** All right, then. That would mean that there may not be questions, then. Okay.

**Mr. Prue:** That's fine.

**The Chair:** Is the committee in favour? Agreed.

MICHAEL WALKER

**The Chair:** Our next deputant may come forward. Please identify yourself for the purposes of our recording Hansard. You have until approximately 12 o'clock.

**Mr. Michael Walker:** My name is Michael Walker. I'm a city councillor with nearly a quarter of a century of political experience at Toronto city hall.

I've come today to speak against really a basic denial of the democratic process in slipping this through omnibus legislation attached to a budget. Have we not learned from the previous government and the commitments that were made about democratic renewal and a more democratic and open government that the longer the term municipally, the less democracy you get, the less public participation you get? I think that's been proven.

If we're going to justify having three levels of government, we've got to make a distinction about what local government is over provincial and federal levels of government. It is the government that's closest to the people that represents basic democratic principles. You are the people's representative; you are the people's advocate. The way to ensure that is that you vote the way the people want on local issues, whether they're big development issues that might result in tens of millions of dollars of profit or local issues relative to a traffic plan or putting in parking. The way to ensure accountability and true democracy, in the Athenian style, is you go back to the people all the time. You make sure that that level of government is different than the others because the politicians are always looking over their shoulder. It does result in the much more bully-pit type of politics of the Athenian forum, where you went down and debated major public issues—the political representatives—before the citizens, the governed, of the day. That's the distinction, and the way to ensure that is greater accountability, and greater accountability is a greater renewing of a mandate with the people through the democratic process.

This proposal is generated by self-interest. It's politically corrupt in its very nature because it's generated by elected politicians who are promoting their own interests and not the public interest. How would this benefit the public interest? It doesn't, because it takes away from that accountability. The comfortableness that politicians get, and the arrogance: The longer they can be away from making decisions that aren't the will of the people that they represent or the people generally, the less there's going to be accountability when you go back to the next election, counting on the people's memories being short. We should be doing exactly the opposite. The greatest city-building in this city and, I believe, in this province, was done under two-year terms. Allan Lamport—he did a plebiscite. He did many plebiscites until he got the vote he looked for to build a subway. The issues of public housing, public health, the building of roads and other public infrastructure were done under two-year terms, whether it was David Crombie or John Sewell or Allan Lamport. That's when great city-building and great policy debates took place, because people were engaged. The issue of the Allen Expressway was one of those cases when public will came to the fore. Political representatives, both municipally and provincially, responded to that by stopping the Allen Expressway going down and desecrating neighbourhoods.

If we're to return to those principles that don't change because government gets bigger and budgets become

bigger—none of those principles do change. They pass on with time. The arguments that were made by some of my colleagues that they need more time to make decisions—and Councillor Lindsay Luby was saying that the day right after the last election, she's out campaigning for the next one. Well, I am too. How could you make those arguments and say you don't want to go back to the public earlier? I think, for most elected officials, it's in their self-interest to not go back to the public as often. It guarantees that they have tenure: "It's my right to hold office. I am the font of all wisdom." It's a lot of horsefeathers, as a president said.

I urge you to abandon this, and most particularly, the way it has been done by stealth, under the radar, trying to sneak it in. One of the deputants said, quite frankly, that if this had merit, you'd hold your head high and wave it from the roof of this Legislative Assembly, and say, "Hear ye, hear ye: We're proposing these public policy changes on how we elect municipal politicians across this wonderful province of ours." We didn't do this. We snuck it in. I only found out because somebody called me, and then I got a copy of the bill and went to the appropriate page and there it was—that deadly poison pill, another anti-democratic move.

I urge you to do the right thing and abandon this or, if not, introduce it as stand-alone legislation and, as in days of old, have your MPPs take it out to their constituencies and ask the people what they want, because ultimately the government belongs to the people, whether it's you, whether it's in Ottawa, or certainly at city hall. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your presentation.

That concludes this morning's business. I would remind persons that they do have a copy of our 11:30 presentation for all committee members.

**Mr. Hudak:** Excuse me, Chair. I know we're out of time. Ms. Ambler has arrived. I know we have a written presentation, but I want to thank her for coming forward. I know traffic is tough. I suspect we don't have time to hear from her, but I do want to thank her for making a presentation.

**The Chair:** Regrettably so. I appreciate her attempt to be here on time, traffic notwithstanding, and appreciate the timeliness of all other presenters this morning.

**Mr. Arnott:** Just to very briefly address that point, I've had a chance to review Stella Ambler's presentation and she is clearly opposed to section H of the bill.

**The Chair:** Thank you. The committee is recessed until following routine proceedings this afternoon.

*The committee recessed from 1159 to 1515.*

**The Chair:** The standing committee on finance and economic affairs will now come to order. I believe each member of the committee has a package of amendments numbered 1 through 15. We'll begin with those this afternoon.

They're numbered, and we'll begin with number 1. It's a PC motion. Any comment?

**Mr. Hudak:** Just before I discuss the motion, I would like to inquire if we've had any responses from the

parliamentary assistant to my earlier request for research information, or through legislative research?

**The Chair:** I'd ask you to repeat that. I was speaking with the clerk.

**Mr. Hudak:** No problem. I was just wondering if we've had any chance of legislative research responding to the questions I tabled earlier today. I know my colleague the parliamentary assistant has been very hard at work on behalf of the Ministry of Finance and may also have some information to table with the committee before we consider amendments to the bill.

**The Chair:** I'll ask the clerk first if we have anything from research.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Douglas Arnott):** I've not yet received anything from research. I do understand that the researcher was hoping to be here at about the start of the meeting to find out if any information had come in or to bring any information she had received, but I've not received any.

**Mr. Hudak:** Thank you. I know that the timelines were extremely tight. Unfortunately, they were the same timelines put upon us in the opposition to provide amendments to the bill due to the time allocation motion that the government brought forward the other night.

I would wonder, to the parliamentary assistant, if the staff of the Ministry of Finance has provided any answers to the information I requested.

**Mr. Arthurs:** I can provide a little bit of information for the benefit of Mr. Hudak, but I think I'd like to put it in the context of a couple of questions he asked. There are technical questions that research is doing work on, things around jurisdictions that have different structures and different terms, and I appreciate the fact that research will be doing that. On those technical matters that would be directed to the ministry, they were doing some work on that and I presume they'll provide us with something, and we'll get it to you from the ministry side at the earliest opportunity.

On some of the questions, though, that were directed to me, reference to issues such as the nature of the debate when both the minister and myself spoke to the matter, I can't speak specifically for the minister, but I think I can safely say that we were focusing our comments on those elements of the budget bill that were the focus of the bill: infrastructure investments, health investments, education investments, those that were having a direct impact in all of those contexts. It being a large bill—the budget being an intense amount of activity, and with limited time—there simply wasn't time to cover all of the matters that one might find in a budget bill.

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I can tell you, though, that as to your questions around the consultations and the information that was available for the purposes of moving forward in this matter, I think it's more than fair to say that the Premier, at ROMA, after some consideration, made an announcement around what our intent would be. This was the first real opportunity to bring the matter forward, to address the matter for this coming municipal election sequence. We have a