

Who Should Decide Local Issues? An Open Letter to MPP Rob Flack

Minister Flack,

Bill 100 has now become law. The debate at Queen's Park may be over, but for many citizens across Ontario, the most important questions are only beginning to be asked.

For nearly two years, Stand4Oxford has been engaged in what should have been a straightforward exercise in local democracy. We asked questions about public expenditures. We attended meetings. We delegated before council. We submitted petitions. We filed freedom-of-information requests. We followed every process available to us as citizens seeking accountability from our local government.

What we discovered was troubling.

Again and again, the distance between residents and decision-makers seemed to grow. Questions became procedural exercises. Requests became endless rounds of clarification. Timelines became delays. Transparency became increasingly difficult to obtain. Over time, we realized our concern was no longer limited to a single issue, a budget line, or a particular initiative. Our concern has become something much larger: accountability itself.

That is why Bill 100 concerns us so deeply.

We have experienced firsthand how difficult accountability can become when citizens are separated from those making decisions. We therefore struggle to understand why Ontario's response is to move authority even farther away from local communities. If accountability is already difficult to achieve, how does concentrating more authority in appointed leadership strengthen democracy? How does it bring government closer to the people it serves?

Citizens across Ontario are increasingly being asked to trust decisions they did not make, processes they cannot influence, and authorities they did not elect. Bill 100 may be presented as government reform, but many residents see it as part of a broader trend. School boards have seen authority reduced. Conservation authorities have been restructured. Strong Mayor powers have expanded. Now appointed regional leadership has become law. Each change is defended on the grounds of efficiency. Yet viewed together, the cumulative effect is unmistakable: **authority moves upward while accountability moves out of reach.**

We are repeatedly told that these changes are necessary to make government work faster. We understand the appeal of efficiency. But efficiency is not the highest principle of democratic government.

Accountability is.

This is why many Ontarians are uneasy. The concern is not merely Bill 100. The concern is, when decisions move away from the people, accountability moves with them.

As the minister who introduced and championed this legislation, you owe Ontario residents clear answers. The democratic implications of Bill 100 deserve public scrutiny, not merely legislative approval.

Why should citizens accept less local control today than they possessed yesterday?

Why should appointed authority be preferred over elected accountability?

And perhaps most importantly, how does Bill 100 strengthen local democracy rather than weaken it?

Stand4Oxford therefore calls upon you to publicly explain and defend the democratic implications of Bill 100 to the residents of Oxford County and to municipalities across Ontario.

Because democracy is more than the right to cast a ballot every four years. It is the ability of citizens to meaningfully influence the decisions that shape their daily lives. When authority is continually centralized, elections remain – but local self-government slowly disappears.

Ontario does not need stronger chairs.

Ontario needs stronger communities.

Bring Decisions Back Home.

Sincerely,
Stand4Oxford
Oxford County, Ontario