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## Take off city tax bill

The Ottawa Citizen

*Thursday, November 06, 2008*

Re: Province's money trick is no treat for cities, Nov. 1.

While columnist Randall Denley believes the landmark agreement signed with municipalities is "no treat for cities," I respectfully disagree with him.

As the Ottawa mayor who had to deal with the fallout of downloading by the Mike Harris government, I was very proud to sign a long-term agreement with our municipal partners that begins uploading costs back to the province from Ontario's municipalities.

For Ottawa, taxpayers will see more than \$121 million removed from municipal budgets for expenses such as welfare, court security, disability support and drug benefit. All of these expenses should never have been on the municipal tax bill in the first place.

I want to thank city councillor Peter Hume, who had a seat at the discussion table, for his efforts on this agreement. Of course, we realize that there is more work to do, but the McGuinty government and Ontario's municipalities have set out a prudent plan, which turns the page on the era of downloading.

Most importantly, we're doing this together in the spirit of co-operation, understanding and respect -- a far cry from how the city was treated 10 years ago.

Jim Watson,

Ottawa

Ottawa West-Nepean MPP

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

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