



No. 9B

N° 9B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Third Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Troisième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 27 May 2002

Lundi 27 mai 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 May 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 mai 2002

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HERITAGE HUNTING
AND FISHING ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LA CHASSE
ET LA PÊCHE PATRIMONIALES

Mr Ouellette moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to recognize Ontario's recreational hunting and fishing heritage and to establish the Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission / Projet de loi 135, Loi visant à reconnaître le patrimoine de la chasse et de la pêche sportives en Ontario et à créer la Commission du patrimoine chasse et pêche.

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): I'll be sharing my time with the member for Peterborough. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 135, the Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act, 2002.

This is a proud day for me personally and a proud day for the government of Ontario. Once again we are delivering on a commitment made by our government. Once again we are keeping a promise, and keeping promises has become a hallmark of our government.

Bill 135 is legislation that, if passed, will preserve the right to hunt and fish in Ontario for recreational purposes. The Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act will mean that the fine tradition of hunting and fishing will be recognized as a right in Ontario, subject to law and regulation. This legislation aims to help maintain a way of life that plays an important economic and social role in many communities across the province, especially in northern Ontario. Hunting and fishing are important to our residents and to visitors to our province.

I might add that hunting and fishing is such an important aspect, yet people don't recognize the economic benefit that takes place. For example, I happen to know the hunting editor for Outdoor Life Magazine. His name would be Jim Zumbo. This individual is read by or is in communication with six million people monthly. You may ask, "Why is knowing that so important?" When you bring individuals like that to the province of Ontario, as is the case this summer when we're bringing Jerry Gibbs—he is the fishing editor for Outdoor Life Magaz-

ine and he'll be spending a significant amount of time in the province experiencing fishing.

When you're read by six million people, typically speaking you have a response rate of about 10% of individuals who are interested in coming to such jurisdictions when those things are put forward, which is a huge benefit. That's 600,000 inquiries of individuals coming to the province of Ontario to go fishing. Normally, out of that you get about a 10% committal rate, which means about 60,000 individuals would come to the province of Ontario because someone such as Jerry Gibbs writes articles about our great province.

Not only that, you might add the fact that on average they stay about five nights. That's about 300,000 overnight stays by bringing an individual such as Jerry Gibbs to the province of Ontario, which is extremely important.

Each year more than 2.4 million people participate in hunting and fishing in Ontario. Each year these activities contribute \$3.5 billion to the provincial economy and support—

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): Will the member take his seat. Stop the clock. I can appreciate that there are strong feelings by members of the public who are here, and you are welcome. This is your place. But I am going to ask you to refrain from any kind of noise or demonstration while the members are speaking. Please, I ask your co-operation. I want you to remain and enjoy the proceedings but that will not be tolerated.

Sorry for the interruption, Minister. Please continue.

Hon Mr Ouellette: Each year these activities contribute \$3.5 billion to the provincial economy and support more than 30,000 jobs.

The Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act was a Blueprint promise by our party in 1999 to legally recognize the right of all Ontarians to hunt and fish. Our government made this commitment to help ensure that future generations of Ontarians have continued opportunities to participate in recreational hunting and fishing activities.

Hunting and fishing are fine traditions that played a role in the founding and settlement of our province, particularly in northern Ontario. We all know the great legacy of the Hudson's Bay Co and all the shed-waters that feed into that. We're proud of these traditions and we're taking action to preserve them. The Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act is for future generations.

You know, it was just Saturday last when my wife, Dianne, and I and our sons, Josh and Garrett, were out

fishing on the Ganaraska River. I was casting a number 14 gold-wrapped pheasant-tail. I was fly casting. For those who don't know what that is, I do tie all my own flies and I actively participate in a lot of those activities.

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There I was, up with Josh, my six-year-old son. He was fishing away and a fish came up and happened to take my fly. He said, "Dad, I want to fish there." I said, "Josh, it's not exactly where you're fishing. Sometimes it's what you're using, and it's understanding all about the fish." I was explaining to Josh that the reason that fish was so interested in the fly I had presented was because that was the fly it happened to be feeding on at that particular time of day. It was an emerging mayfly, which meant there was a hatch on, the flies were coming out and this particular fly was very attractive to a lot of rainbow trout that were there. It was understanding nature and more or less passing that on to my sons, Josh and Garrett, so they understood that it wasn't just a hook, a worm and a bobber that goes floating by when fishing takes place; it's understanding a lot about nature.

The government will continue to set standards and policy to help ensure that hunting and fishing are managed in a sound, sustainable manner and in accordance with ethical and humane practices.

When I talk a lot about youth—my wife, Dianne, and I were moose hunting in Foleyet, down the Ivanhoe River.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Did you have a tag?

Hon Mr Ouellette: The member opposite asks if we had a tag. Actually yes, we did at that particular time.

Mr Bisson: When did you get it? As minister?

Hon Mr Ouellette: No, this was years ago, long before I became minister.

We were about eight hours downriver to the first camp, and it was another eight hours from that position down to the second camp. With us we had Pierre Gagnon and his brother Philip, who was only 10 at the time. It was so interesting to find that he was completely at home, where my wife was not feeling quite so comfortable with all the surroundings that deep in the bush. It was 16 hours to where we were, and so it was 16 hours to get out. It takes quite a while to get to these locations and to enjoy those sorts of experiences.

We had canoed up to a section of river, and then we were compassing into a lake. At that point, I did a number of calls and then proceeded to where we heard some noise. My wife, Dianne, and Philip, the 10-year-old, were at the place where we originally called, and there happened to be a fly-in fishing camp at this location. We were quite a way into the bush, and it's rather unique to be able to go to those places that you can access. While we were there, Philip was playing on a 45-gallon drum—a 10-year-old; what do you expect in the bush? He's playing away, beating the drum and not thinking anything of it. All of a sudden they turn around and standing there is a bull moose. Well, it starts to run, and Philip starts yelling, "It's a moose. It's a moose. It runs just like my horse." Of course my wife is not

expecting any of this and is quite surprised by the whole case.

There are two points here. One is the opportunity to pass this legacy of understanding on to generations. Not only that, but we spent the entire week and quite frankly we didn't get a moose. There were many cases where we did not get a moose, but it's the opportunity to experience it, to be able to talk about it to future generations, that makes it so interesting to so many people in Ontario.

As part of the Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act, the government intends to establish the Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission. As designed, it would provide advice to me on a wide variety of fish and wildlife initiatives. It would function as an advocate for recreational hunting and fishing by fostering outreach programs and by promoting hunting and fishing tourism opportunities.

I would also encourage greater participation in fish and wildlife conservation programs. When we speak about programs, there are a number of programs I ran in the riding I represent, which is Oshawa, before becoming minister. We have one that's called the classroom hatchery program, and we've done this for a number of years. We've made arrangements with the schools and with volunteer groups and organizations such as the Metro East Anglers. What takes place is that we take the kids down to Oshawa Creek, where they see a stretch of stream that's normally recognized by a lot of kids as being more or less a place to throw shopping carts in a lot of cases—not necessarily all, but some. It doesn't really represent a lot, other than water flowing through the community. In this stretch of stream, about 50 yards, we happened to take about 150 rainbow trout this year.

What takes place is that the Metro East Anglers, with a team of volunteers, come and momentarily electro-shock the fish, which just more or less stuns them. That allows us to easily capture them. After they're stunned, they float up to the surface, and then they're put into a processing area. Once we get enough fish in that particular area, we then advance to removing the eggs and milk from the fish. The kids are there, the volunteers are there with the parents and the teachers are there. It's actually a phenomenal program when you find out that the parents start asking more questions than the kids, because they're so interested in it. They see the fish, they see us remove the eggs, and then afterwards—we only remove about, in most cases, three quarters of the number of eggs, and then the fish are put back in the water and allowed to continue on their normal life cycle.

What then takes place is, the eggs are taken to a hatchery. At this particular hatchery, the eggs go through a delicate stage where they're fertilized and then they're put through what's called an eyed-up stage. It's at this eyed-up stage where they're brought back to the classroom. The process for that is, you have to make sure the water temperature is correct and the oxygen levels are correct. Then the eggs were taken back from the hatchery and put into the classroom aquariums.

The kids see it in the stream; then they go to the classrooms and see aquariums with eggs in them. They actu-

ally watch the eggs hatch. Once they swim up, which they've done on two other occasions already, we take all the swim-up fry and release them back into the stream. The kids see the whole process.

What we've done here is that we've established looking at a new stream in a different light, because there actually is life in there that has continued on. They see a whole life process in this particular incident, and they understand that the stream has an extreme value.

Not only that, but in the average hatchery you would have a 3% to 5% success rate. In this particular classroom hatchery program that we do, we have about a 90% to 95% successful hatch rate where we return the fish back into the stream. So it's very successful and it teaches the kids. We're up to four schools now. There are four schools that are actively participating in this program. The teachers are coming up to me and saying, "I can't teach the kids what you're showing them in that particular aquarium." So we're seeing a lot of programs in the development of youth and understanding on that.

Our government has proven its commitment to fish and wildlife. We have worked hard to help protect fish and wildlife habitat and to preserve species at risk.

We have a significant number of guests with us here today in the gallery. I might direct the members' attention to the members' gallery on the side here. We have Mr John Bell. He is the president of the Ontario Sporting Dogs Association. Mr Ray Gosselin is the executive director for COHA, the Canadian Outdoor Heritage Alliance. We have Nathalie Parady, who is the vice-chair of the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Board, as well as the owner of Gagnon Sports. We have an extremely active individual, Len McRitchie, who's very active in a lot of organizations and has been very instrumental in elk reintroduction in the province of Ontario.

We have Bob Fraser, who's the president of the Ontario Bear Hound Association. We have Andy Houser, who's from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. We have Howard Noseworthy, from the Ontario Fur Managers Federation. He came down from Sault Ste Marie to be with us today. We have Kevin Goldstein, who's the president of the Safari Club. As well, we have Norm Monaghan, who's a director for the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters as well as the Zone G chairman. I think also we have Tony Bernardo, who's the executive director for CILA, the Canadian Institute for Legislative Action.

I want to thank all these individuals for taking the time to come out today.

It's a lot of organizations and individuals such as this that actually take the time. One of the programs that I briefly mentioned was the classroom hatchery, where the Metro East Anglers came out and helped on that. Another one that we've been doing for a number of years now will shortly be coming up again: Kids' Fishing Day. Last year a number of organizations—Norm Monaghan, the South-Central Ontario Big Game Association, the Metro East Anglers and a lot of other organizations—actively participated in bringing out kids who typically don't get

the opportunity to experience the outdoors. We had nature trail hikes, where the Metro East Anglers did birdwatching and understanding of a lot of the typical happenings in the forest, as well as the opportunity to go fishing.

Not only that, but we had a snapping turtle come up and begin to lay its eggs, which was an experience that a lot of these kids never have had the opportunity to enjoy.

The Y participated, the Settlement House, the Boys and Girls Club, community health, the police department, and Chris Partridge from the Durham Regional Police actively participated. He came up and he said, "A lot of these kids have never even had the opportunity to go on a bus ride before. Here we've given them the opportunity to get out, to have a full day and a barbecue and a lot of experience."

This year, I might add that we have Ducks Unlimited coming on-line to help out with the program. Last year we had over 450 children out on that particular day, and this year we're expecting a lot more.

There are a lot of groups and organizations that have participated actively and worked very hard throughout the province. I happened to be with Mr Bell when we were moose hunting on the Pagwachuan River. It was quite a ways in; we had to drive in through one of those bush roads that Mr Bisson is so concerned about, and I fully understand why. We put in there and then it was eight hours downriver from there. There was nobody there.

1900

There were three of us in a canoe and we were up a small tributary. We were paddling along and there were three mallards swimming in front of us. All of a sudden there was a huge splash in the water and two mallards took off because the third one had been consumed by a fish right in front of us. I know Mr Wettlaufer is quite concerned; he wants to know exactly where that is, because just think of it: in the September season a full-grown duck being consumed by a fish right in front of you.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Ouellette: No, it's not; it's true, Mr Murdoch. This is a true story. Actually, it was quite interesting. I know Mr Murdoch has a very active outdoor club and runs a great salmon spectacular up in Owen Sound every year. He does a very good job in the community, in promoting the hatcheries up there—the Sydenham hatchery and the Chatsworth hatchery, I believe it is. These organizations are very active and work very hard.

It's all about passing these things on to generations. When my kids were first born, we'd take them out in a boat. It's not so much catching a fish or the big fish or fish all the time; it's just about keeping busy. Every time we caught a fish, we would have a cooler of water inside the boat. Whether it was a perch, a rock bass, a small-mouth or any of the other ones, we would put the fish in the cooler, and the kids just had a ball watching them swim around. At the end of the day, before we went

back, we put all the fish back in the water. That was an experience that they so much enjoyed.

They want to hear about some interesting stories, because I imagine there will be quite a few stories told during this debate. We were out at this particular location, Benoir Lake, which is at the top end of Elephant or Baptiste Lake. We were at a cottage and finally it was the day to go home. I hadn't had an opportunity to go fishing in the fashion that I rather enjoy. The boys were with my wife, Dianne, up at the cottage and I went down to the dock and started casting. "Dad's down at the water," and the kids come running down. They're splashing in the water and it's like, "It's not going to happen."

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Is this part of the bill?

Hon Mr Ouellette: It's hunting and fishing, and that's what this bill is about. So we were there and the boys came down and they wanted to play in the water. I was a little frustrated, so I said, "Boys, are you going to play in the water here?" They said, "Yes, Dad." I said, "I'm going to the dock over there to cast," because this particular area is quite well known for muskie and pickerel. So I started casting and then my older son comes up and says, "Dad, can I fish with you?" I said, "Sure, Josh, you can, but you've got to keep quiet, remember." He said, "No problem." At that time he puts his feet in the water and he starts splashing away. "Josh, we're not going to catch any fish if you keep splashing away."

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): The fish will eat him.

Hon Mr Ouellette: Mr Murdoch says, "The fish will eat him." So we're casting away and I just give up. I figure, "That's it, no more fish this weekend; no more fish this week," which is fine. So I cast out and I'm just reeling in, just to be there, and all of a sudden I catch about a pound-and-a-half smallmouth bass. I reel the bass in. My son is there and this is the biggest fish they've seen the entire time. So I say, "Josh, go get Mom." So he rushes off to get his mother and his brother and Baba, which Mr Kormos can identify with very clearly. Baba had to come over. I played the fish like it was a big fish because, quite frankly, in their eyes it was a big fish.

Before that, I had had my reel fixed, or so I thought.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This is a long story.

Hon Mr Ouellette: No, it's not that long a story, Mr Kormos. So I'm reeling away and all of a sudden I tell my wife, Dianne, that I'm going to bring the fish in to show the kids. So I'm bringing the fish in and, guess what? The reel is broken; it's not coming in. I'm reeling and reeling and nothing is happening. I'm tightening the drag, reeling it in and still nothing. I say to Dianne, "I'm going to back up, show the fish to the kids and then I'll see if I can just get the fish off and let it go on its way." When I back up, sitting there, I pull backwards and there is the pound-and-a-half bass sitting sideways in a muskie's mouth. Of course everybody is excited.

Mr Murdoch: Is this the muskie that ate the duck?

Hon Mr Ouellette: No, this is a different spot, Mr Murdoch. It's not the muskie that ate the duck.

Mr Parsons: Is this still the same story?

Hon Mr Ouellette: It's still the same story. So I say, "Get the net, get the net." What do I do? I pull on the fish and the fish comes right out of the muskie's mouth. So I looked and I thought, "Oh no." The muskie just kind of looked. You'd almost swear he'd wrinkled his brow and he attacked that fish again. Three times this happened—this is a true story—and on the third time the hook came out of the bass and hooked the muskie and I landed the muskie. To this day I have the picture to show that.

The look on the kids when they saw the fish in the water they were swimming and splashing in certainly opened their eyes. It was an experience and it was an understanding of nature, that we can swim in this water and this fish can live in there. Of course we released the muskie back into the water and allowed it to go on its way. It was about a 40-inch muskie and it was something to see—that pound-and-a-half bass sideways in that 40-inch muskie's mouth. It certainly was something.

I see there are other members here and I know we've done quite a number of speeches throughout the province. On a regular basis, some of us are asked to say a grace. One of the graces that I've expressed in the past goes like this: "Oh great Manitou, we thank thee for the bounty of nature thou has bestowed upon us, thy humble servants. We thank thee for the flutter of many wings in the springtime, for the forests and the big and the little creatures that dwell therein. We thank thee for the clear, cool waters of our many lakes and rivers and for the many finny denizens that live therein."

What that says is, it talks about the appreciation. I know it was at the Temagami Chamber of Commerce dinner—the member from Temagami is here—where I gave that grace, and there were so many people from not only the First Nation community but the outdoors community who came up and gave such an appreciation of saying that grace that a lot of them asked for it and I did pass it on to them. It was at that particular event that I became the 2000 moose-calling champion for Temagami and district.

Mr Murdoch: Can you do that in here?

Hon Mr Ouellette: I don't know if I can. I don't know if everybody wants me to give a moose call. Maybe a little later we can do a little moose calling.

This was a wild game dinner in Temagami that was put on by the community, sponsored by the chamber of commerce in that community. It was to raise funds for advertising for the community and for the promotion of Temagami in the area, and it was something that is taking place throughout all of Ontario. So many of the anglers and the hunters are contributing back in so many different ways. Not only did we mention the financial aspect and mention the volunteers in the classroom hatchery program, but there are a lot of the organizations that are in attendance here today that spend a lot of time conserving those wetlands or preserving all those sites

throughout the province, because they're so concerned about the fish and wildlife of this province as well.

They are dedicated individuals who spend a lot of their time in the bush and work very hard on behalf of those aspects. I know Mr Monaghan is here and he's the director for the South Central Ontario Big Game Association, an organization that in the past has spent thousands of person-hours, volunteer hours, working on things like the trail—there's a number of trails down at the Second Marsh; they cleaned up the Second Marsh. I assisted there and they took out I think it was five or six bins full of garbage from the stream, that had the stream backed up. We had taken tires out and shopping carts and all sorts of garbage. We just piled it up. It was thousands of volunteer hours that made those things happen, from organizations such as the South Central Ontario Big Game Association.

Not only that, but they also provide educational opportunities so that people can enjoy and experience the outdoors in many fashions. You know something? One thing is, in all of the hunting experiences that I've mentioned here tonight there wasn't one time where we actually had taken something. We participated in the outdoors, we gained experience and we had a lot of enjoyment. And we contributed financially, if that's the way people want to view those things. But the biggest thing is, we gained a personal understanding of the outdoors, which is so important to so many people.

The South Central Ontario Big Game Association is very active and used to teach a moose-hunting seminar. I can remember the Leslie Frost centre in Dorset where they would go up for years at a time, and people from all across the province would come into the location, spend the time in order to gain more experience and understanding about all the activities and big game such as moose. Not only that, but this particular organization now has the Carl Sedore deer yard. It was a deer yard that was actively worked in. What they do in this particular area—there's about 100 or 200 acres there—is go in and cut one- to two-acre plots of bush in this particular area. They'll pile it up so the deer and animals in that area can feed on it.

1910

For those who don't know, rabbits will use these brush piles as protection to ensure they're protected from predators. Not only that, but they are nesting sites for them. When they cut this brush, the one-acre plots, it develops self-sustaining new growth in the area.

A lot of things we do in the province of Ontario are not so much managed for the game and the animals that are around. These organizations go up every single year and spend hundreds of hours of personal time. They use all their own equipment and their own Argos and snow machines to get in there and work on it. These are just some examples of things that so many organizations participate in.

When we talk about these activities, I can remember the relationships. They're not just with future generations or your camaraderie with your friends and other things like that. It's also understanding the pets you may have.

I can remember a dog of mine, a Chesapeake Bay retriever by the name of Ginger. Ginger and I were out duck hunting at the time. I had a set of chest waders. I was duck hunting from a particular beaver lodge. I looked over at my friends, who just had standard rubber boots that you'd buy for fuddling about in the backyard when you're gardening; they weren't even knee-high rubber boots. I asked them, "Al, Rick, would you like me to leave the dog with you?" They said, "Oh, that would be great, Jerry. We'd really appreciate that."

It had been an active day—you can hear each other back and forth in the pond—so I came out early. I walked up, and these guys looked at me. The dog looked up at me, and then it ran into the water. They looked at me and cursed. They said, "Jerry, you," and cursed on and on at me, back and forth. They said, "What was the last thing you said to that dog?" It was two or three hours ago; I was trying to scramble. I said, "Oh yeah. 'Ginger, sit. Ginger, stay.'" For two or three hours that dog sat there and never moved until it saw me. It's a true story. As soon as it saw me, it headed into the pond.

These are examples of relationships you build, not only with your friends or your kids for future generations, but also with the pets you have. It was one example about Ginger that was just phenomenal. People couldn't believe that a dog would take a command. Every time a flight of ducks would come in, the dog would spot them, jump up, run around and sit back down. It was another example of a relationship built.

I know there were other occasions when I had a beagle—

Mr Parsons: Was there more than one dog?

Hon Mr Ouellette: No, there was only one dog that particular time, although there was another dog that I owned as well, a beagle, Tessa.

Tessa was a very active dog and quite well known. She entered some of the trials. Some organizations go out on trials and actually run rabbits, not for hunting purposes but for training the dogs and to exercise the dogs as well. She was very active and did very well in those situations. But it was a relationship: "Hey, Tessa, do you want to go hunting?" She would look and go right to the door with her leash and collar in her mouth. She fully understood everything. It wasn't so much that I would even bother taking shells at times. I might take a firearm, but a lot of times I didn't take any shells. I just wanted to go out and have an experience with the dog.

It was quite interesting, in this particular case—she was a beagle. I would take people out. We would go to a location, sit down and I'd build a fire. Everybody would say, "What are you doing?"

I said, "We're hunting."

They said, "Well, why are we doing this?"

I said, "The dog will tell us."

They said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "Just stay here and watch."

So we'd get a fire going. The dog would run out 100 or 200 yards until she had completed a full circle around us. When she picked up her own scent where she started,

she would come back to us and start whining. I'd say, "There's no game in this area." They'd look, and they couldn't believe you'd understand an animal and know it was talking to you. I'd look at them and say, "You just have to understand dogs. They do talk to you. They understand." That's how they know when you say, "Do you want to go hunting?" They get all excited and move toward that. Those are just some of the things that take place.

I can remember another time. It happened to be the same time when I spoke about Philip Gagnon. It was a Thanksgiving weekend, and we were 16 hours into the bush. We were down there, and Pierre said—and I know Mr Bell would remember this particular case—"Whatever you do, sleep under your sleeping bag." We were staying in a trap camp. It was a small camp that would be the size of four desks—well, maybe six desks—and that's about it.

I said, "Why sleep under the sleeping bag?" and they said, "You'll understand." So of course you don't sleep under your sleeping bag, and in the middle of the night all of a sudden you'd wake up as a mouse or a squirrel would run across your face. It was quite the experience. I can remember one time when we were there, I woke up in the middle of the night and I could feel something rather funny happening to my hand. I looked down and there was a mouse chewing on my fingernail. Of course, you wake up in a panic and shake your hand. But they were all experiences. In every one of those cases that I mentioned earlier on, we didn't get anything in those particular days except the enjoyment of being in the outdoors, not only with family but with friends and with the pets that we so much spend our time with.

I know that this year, Kids' Fishing Day, we have Ducks Unlimited coming in. There is an organization that has conserved thousands of hectares of land throughout the province and the country. I know they are very concerned with water quality and they work very actively with it. There are organizations such as those and such as the ones that are in attendance today that work so hard at preserving a lot of the outdoors and a lot of the outdoor commitment and passing it on to generations. I know the OFAH, along with COHA, has a youth program to help bring in new youth so that they have an understanding. That's essentially the same thing we did on the Kids' Fishing Day. It was an opportunity to take kids out into the bush or the field. This year we have—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): When is that?

Hon Mr Ouellette: Mr O'Toole is asking when that is. It's Saturday, June 8. This year we have a nature trail hike. We have dog demonstrations so that kids understand the relationship with pets.

But hunting and fishing aren't always about getting something. I can remember another time when my wife, Dianne, and I were running with our dog with another friend. We had put my wife in a particular spot, and she was sitting there and we could hear the dog going through and going through. After that, we all walked out, and it was another one of those days where nobody had

even had a shot or had an opportunity. We asked, "What happened? We heard the dog go right by you. Did you not hear anything or see anything?" Dianne looks up and says, "Oh, I didn't see anything. I didn't see anything." So I said, "Well, I don't understand, because we could hear it. It sounded like that dog went right by you." Later on, she said, "Well, I didn't want to say anything, but the rabbit went right by and the dog went by, and the dog looked up at me and gave me one of those looks like, 'What's the matter with you? It was right there.'" So I was afraid, because the dog was giving me heck and you people were giving me heck." I said, "Dianne, you don't understand. You don't always have to get something. It's more, 'Did you have a good time?'" Well, the dog had a good time, I had a good time, everybody had a good time. It's understanding that relationship with nature, to be able to say that the rabbit went by, the dog went by, and you just looked up.

I'll give you another incident, not this fall but the previous fall. I get pretty active, or used to be fairly active. I'd been invited out with a number of organizations. The Northumberland wild turkey chapter individuals, the executive, had invited me out for a goose hunt. So I put all the gear on my boys. At the time, they would be four and five. We went out and I sat them on the edge of a cornfield. Of course, four- and five-year-olds, what do you expect? They can't sit still too long. So we got up and walked around and we looked over and there was a 10-point buck, which essentially is a deer that has 10 points on it. It was walking from a wooded area over into the cornfield to feed in the field we were in. The boys had a marvellous time just looking down, experiencing that.

Then we went back, after they had settled down a bit, and all of a sudden a flight of geese came in. I'm looking over and I'm saying, "Now, don't move, guys, because they'll see you and they'll go." So I looked over, and the youngest boy, Garrett—I had to reach over, because while the geese were flying over, I had to stop him from falling off his chair. He couldn't believe they were going over. Josh looks up at me and says, "Dad, why didn't you shoot?" I said, "Josh, why didn't you shoot?" He said, "Dad, I don't have a gun." I said, "But are you hunting?" He said, "Well, yeah." I said, "Josh, just because you go hunting doesn't mean you always have to take something." At that point, he understood there was a larger relationship than just going out and taking something. That was another example of showing the youth of today that hunting is more an understanding and appreciation of nature.

Yes, there are times when you do take animals. There are times when you can. There have been a number of situations I've been in where typically people will come up and say, "Oh, it's terrible that you're hunting." It's usually around a function of some kind. I'll look over and say, "Well, how was the roast beef sandwich?" and they look at me and say, "What do you mean?" I say, "You don't understand. The animal you're eating right there was raised for one purpose and one purpose only, and

that was for your consumption.” At least a lot of the people, when they go hunting, have the opportunity to choose the animals they wish to take or do not wish to take, and there are a lot of individuals who participate in this activity.

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I remember Tudor Howard Davies. He was probably the most experienced big-game hunter I've ever met, possibly one of the best in the world. He worked in a lot of the African countries as a—essentially it's our equivalent of a conservation officer. What Tudor would actively do is, he would be sent out by biologists to regulate herds. He would be told, “Oh, you might have to take 100 four-year-old females out of this particular herd.” He would have to be able to go out and identify these animals and to recognize the age of them at a distance. As an individual, he had more respect for nature than anybody I'd ever met. He'd often said that as a professional hunter in Africa he would never take a rhino nor would he have the intention of guiding anyone who would ever take a rhino, because there was nothing in that animal that would be hunted. It was there and you took these things.

It was individuals like this who gave experience. I can remember he said, “Does anybody know how to do a pat?” I said, “What is a pat, Tudor?” and he said, “A pat is when an animal is coming along and you know the game trail and if you pat the ground down you can tell whether it's a female and the age and the weight of the animal simply by the wear on the hooves, the position of the hooves and the depth of the print.” It was that sort of experience that some people can understand. You often hear about the native hunters in Africa, why they're so experienced and know so much about these things. That's because they can identify with nature so much that they'd be able to identify an animal by its weight in the depression that it leaves, the wear on its hooves and other aspects like that.

But there are so many things that contribute to the community as well.

I can remember as well Dr Peter Martin in Kapuskasing—Mr Bisson may know Dr Peter Martin—where I was invited out with Peter Martin. On the morning we went out it was for a goose hunt and it was another one of those incidents where nobody got any geese, nobody had any shooting, yet in the field beside us over a thousand sandhill cranes landed that morning. The farmer wasn't too happy, mind you, because sandhill cranes—

Mr Murdoch: How many?

Hon Mr Ouellette: Over a thousand sandhill cranes landed and it was just the most—it's like a prehistoric sound that they make when they come in, and they were coming in from all directions.

Hon John R. Baird (Associate Minister of Francophone Affairs): What sound?

Hon Mr Ouellette: I don't want to give the sound, Mr Baird, but it's kind of a chirp. It's a high-pitched kind of a chirp and they would come from all directions. But the farmers in that area were extremely upset because these

animals will eat standing grain. Guess what? As my wife constantly says, these animals need a place to live as well.

As we expand our jurisdictions and our land, our mass, and are building our houses, we put a lot more pressure on a lot of this game, a lot of game species and a lot of animals looking for places to live. A lot of organizations from all aspects, not just the outdoors and the hunting community, but from other communities as well, want to ensure the long-term livelihood of nature in Ontario. That's why we have things such as the Oak Ridges moraine legislation.

I've had the opportunity to speak on so many issues today and I very much appreciate that. I know Mr Stewart is going to speak shortly and a lot of other members look forward to speaking on this particular piece of legislation.

Recently in the National Post—it was on Friday, May 24: “Atlantic Salmon on Brink of Extinction.” Yet when they talk about extinction in that particular case, here is a fly fisherman casting out. It's the Atlantic Salmon Federation that is actively working, in the same fashion as a lot of other organizations are, to protect that resource for future generations.

I worked with Metro East Anglers in their hatchery, where this year they had approximately 100,000 Atlantic salmon eggs coming in. Not only that, but in the natural process for them approximately 80,000 of those eggs had passed on. You have to remember that in nature 3% to 5% is a good success rate for a lot of those eggs. Yet here's an organization that's actively putting in what it's taking out, as so many do in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. You are sharing with the member for Peterborough, so you now have the floor, sir.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I too am very pleased to speak to the Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act. I would just like to read what this act says. I think this is the part you have to realize; it recognizes the right to hunt and fish recreationally in accordance with Ontario laws. That's the key to this entire act, that there is the right to hunt and fish in this province but they have to be done in accordance with the act. I believe, and it's a fact, that the legislation emphasizes that properly regulated hunting and fishing are legitimate and appropriate activities that Ontarians have enjoyed for generations.

I too want to welcome the group, all of whom are members of the hunting and fishing community, as well as representing many organizations that are involved with environmental and conservation issues in this province. I appreciate their being here.

I also want to thank a couple of people. I had the privilege under the previous Premier to be asked to chair the committee that initiated the Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act. There were two people who were members of that committee, one being Gerry Lee and the other one Pat Kennedy, both of whom are very ardent hunters and fishermen but also believe in conservation of our wildlife and our resources in this province.

The reason that we put the name of “heritage” on this particular act is that hunting and fishing go back, basically, to the beginning of time. I just want to read to you a section, if I may, and it is from the Heritage Gazette of the Trent Valley-Fairview Heritage Centre. It was a piece that was in the Peterborough Examiner on October 30, 1909. It’s titled “Peterborough’s Deer Hunters Off to their Favourite Trails.”

“Will be ready for the opening of the season on Monday morning—where local enthusiasts will follow the monarchs of the forest.

“Monday, the first of November is the official opening of the deer shooting season which will be ushered in with the baying of hounds and re-echoing rifle reports in the unbroken wilds of the northern country. Peterborough’s sporting fraternity have been leaving in groups during the past few days and by tonight they will all be gone. A long cold drive and a rest tomorrow in preparation for an early start on Monday morning and then with the dawn of the morrow the curtain will be wrung up. The weather is inviting and the prospects are of the best. The nights, however, are too cold, and in consequence the creeks and bays of the lakes are frozen up every morning, and it is said the ice has not disappeared before the noonday sun. A little finer weather and the conditions could not be improved upon.”

Under that it has “Battle Lake Party.”

“One of the happiest parties that leave Peterborough is that which makes its headquarters on the shore of Battle Lake.... They not only have plenty of sport but their evenings are spent pleasantly and as a male chorus they would do credit to a Schubert production. Battle Lake still re-echoes with last year’s favourite....”

Another one: “Mr J.B. Laroque has gone to Parry Sound where he will hunt with a Toronto party. They still go in for big game and all guesses are wrong if ‘Bat’ does not bring down a moose.”

The reason I read that was the fact that this is a heritage, this is something that has gone on in Ontario and indeed in Canada from the beginning of time. I believe that it should be enshrined in legislation, that we do have that right, providing we comply with the laws that we make.

That’s one of the keys with the commission that’s going to be established: that we will have people who are involved in the sport, in the recreation; we’ll have the people who are involved with conservation, those who want to make sure that environmentally things are the way they should be, because hunting is a lawful and responsible pursuit of wildlife. It includes the opportunity to harvest animals for food, clothing and cultural purposes. Hunting also remains a relevant and enduring part of our culture and heritage.

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Early leaders in the hunting community, people like Seton, Roosevelt and Leopold, recognized and promoted the need for conservation policies and programs to benefit all wild creatures in North America.

The hunting community has always been in the forefront of ensuring the continued welfare of all wildlife and

their habitats. Organizations that these gentlemen and ladies over there represent put major dollars into the habitat, conservation and wildlife resources in this province, much of which—through the ministry and through the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Ducks Unlimited and all of the other ones—is based on good science-based management, careful regulation and habitat conservation. They have also created programs, both for young people and we old, to make sure that we do protect the wildlife and that we have a sustaining resource.

It was interesting when Jerry was telling about some of the stories of the fish he caught. I probably should stand up here and tell you about the fish that got away or certainly the wildlife I didn’t hit when I was hunting.

I must say that I belong to the Indian River Hunt Club, a club that is very family-oriented. I’ve had the pleasure of my wife being in the camp a good many times, my son, my daughter, their friends. It has become a family venture a number of times each year and I think that’s one of the keys to it. Look at the programs that the minister talked about, whether it be the Greenwing program with Ducks Unlimited or the annual family fishing weekend, the program that anglers and hunters have where kids can go and borrow a rod and reel and go out fishing for the weekend—tremendous programs. In fact, as you know, the anglers and hunters head office is located in the great riding of Peterborough and in front of their facility they have a pond. That pond is to allow disabled kids to come and fish and have that experience, that they probably wouldn’t have otherwise. I think it’s a tremendous initiative on their part and I can tell you that the kids enjoy it.

One of the other things this act does and will do with the establishment of the commission is that hunting and fishing will continue to be ecologically sustainable, it will be safe, it will be lawful, it will be ethical and it will be true to the hunting heritage of our forefathers.

When people think of hunting and fishing, they think, “Oh, Jeez, it’s all guys; it’s that guys’ weekend away.” Let me assure you that you heard from the minister that he took his wife on various hunting trips. There are more and more women getting involved in this sport, in this recreation. Programs are out there to introduce not only the young but women as well to it. Certainly they are very, very involved with it.

If you look at some of the stats that were done by the Hunting Heritage Hunting Futures program, some of the stats you might be interested in are: only 8% of Ontarians are against hunting under any conditions; 35% of Ontarians believe that hunting may be acceptable given some limitations, and I think that’s where the commission comes into effect; over half of Ontarians are either hunters themselves or find it acceptable for others to do; 85% of Ontarians think there are at least circumstances that make hunting and fishing acceptable. Those are good stats. Those are stats that the people of this province want to know about.

Hunters are conservationists; 60% of residents of Ontario agree with that. Three quarters of the people in the

province believe hunting is an acceptable strategy to manage wildlife populations. I think that's one of the keys to it: hunting and fishing do manage wildlife populations. About 62% believe hunters do their part through wildlife management programs. And the public needs to be reminded that the dollars produced from licence revenues support all these initiatives.

Another interesting stat is that 82% of Ontarians believe hunting is part of Canada's cultural heritage. It's interesting when you sit back and ask who are the hunters in your community. "Oh, those are those rednecks. Those are the guys who drive around in a half-ton with a red cap on," and so on and so forth. Who are the hunters in your community? Let me tell you. They're your doctor, your bank manager, the guy or the woman who fixes your car, the local fireman, your plumber. Those are the hunters. Those are the ordinary people of this province who are involved in hunting and fishing. They are concerned about making sure conservation is maintained, that the laws are maintained, that safety is maintained and that ethics are maintained.

Hunters look just like you and me. They're your neighbours. They're your friends and relatives. They're just ordinary people enjoying an activity. Much the same as other activities you enjoy, they enjoy the one they are doing. As Jerry mentioned, they are family outings, major family outings.

Hunters are conservationists and are key to sustaining our wildlife populations in healthy conditions. Hunters put more time, effort and money into conservation and environment programs than any other group of people. Hunters, fishermen and farmers are the original environmentalists. Their knowledge of land and concern for our environment are part of our hunting and fishing heritage. Hunters and hunting, fishermen and fishing play a major role, as I said, in controlling the wildlife populations. They are a major contributor to our conservation efforts. Without them, and without the organizations we have in this province, it's a recreation that will be totally out of control and will die in the long term.

Mr Speaker, I don't know whether we have another member who would like to make comments. I assume his not being named is satisfactory. I would ask that all members of this House support this legislation. It is an act that I believe is long overdue, an act that will help us control the wildlife population, make sure it is healthy and make sure our kids, our grandkids and our great-grandkids have the opportunity to hunt and fish in the future. Certainly the apprenticeship programs we have and the safety programs we have—I want to congratulate all those who are involved in this recreation. For those who have gone out of their way—and you have these people up here—who are dedicated to making sure—and I would hope that maybe those as well would realize this is a recreation but not only that. We want to conserve; we want to keep the resources the way they are, if we want a healthy population of animals and fish in this province, it's groups like these that get behind this and we put the dollars in.

I'm going to sit down, Mr Speaker. I thank you for allowing me to speak to this bill. I will suggest that the member for Lanark-Carleton would continue.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

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Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Transportation): It's indeed a pleasure to speak in support of this act. I have the distinction of representing a riding which is half within the city of Ottawa and the other half is the county of Lanark. When you get to the back of the county of Lanark, the northwest portion of it, you get to a very sparsely populated area where there is indeed still a lot of crown land.

In representing both of those kinds of constituencies, I hear from both sides of society in terms of talking about hunting, fishing and animal issues. I can't tell members who represent urban areas how important hunting and fishing are to the rural way of life. I know of course that there are many people who live in urban Ontario who also participate very much in both of these activities.

But from a rural standpoint it is not only a recreation, it is actually a way of life they have taken on that has been handed down by their families and that they believe in very strongly. The hunting and fishing communities have worked over the past 100 years with various different government departments to be absolutely certain that their love will continue on into the next generation, and not only the next generation but for many future generations to come.

When we have a crisis with regard to animal populations and those kinds of things, it is often the hunting community that comes forward and says, "We have to find a solution to this." I'm told, for instance, that now in the province of Ontario we have something like 25 million deer, whereas at the turn of the 1900s there were only about 15 million deer in all of Ontario. That's alarming from the standpoint of not only those people who drive up and down different roads; it's also alarming from the standpoint of people who want to see deer continue to exist, free of disease, strong and healthy.

I have found, in my experience over the past 25 years in serving here as a member of the Legislature, when I have had the pleasure of representing people both from urban settings and rural settings, a tremendous contribution from this community, which considers this bill very important to them for defining their rights. I have found that they have contributed very greatly to the enjoyment of the people of Ontario. I'm told that over 35% of the population of Ontario actually casts a line each year. That illustrates how important and how popular that kind of activity is.

I believe that this bill will give credibility to the thoughts, desires, aims and principles of both the angling and hunting communities. Far too often I read or hear a newscast or a story from a person in the media which goes unchallenged. I would hope this commission, when it is set up, is better able to explain the point of view, bring forward the facts with regard to the other side of the story. I think it's not told often enough as to why it's

necessary to have a longer hunting season, why it's necessary to have a special hunt in a particular area in order to cull out the herd, in order to produce a healthy stock of animals for the future.

I really hope this commission that we're setting up will represent with a stronger and more unified voice. Even though we have had very strong organizations in the past, I hope they are able to explain to the public at large how important hunting and fishing are to the people of Ontario.

I congratulate the Minister of Natural Resources for bringing this bill forward. I think it's long overdue. It's a great recognition of the group, the people who are sitting in the gallery today, and the many clubs, the many people who have volunteered a huge number of hours to sustain this very important activity in our province.

The Deputy Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes to ask questions or make statements with regard to the government's opening debate. The Chair recognizes the member for Sudbury.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I have to suggest to you that you have offered an awful lot of latitude to the members for Oshawa, Peterborough and Lanark-Carleton, because they didn't spend a whole lot of time talking about Bill 135, the Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act.

It's the position of the Liberals that this bill should already be law. It was our position on December 12, when we asked for unanimous consent in this House to have passage of this bill. Of course, as we all know, it was the NDP who blocked that.

I have to tell the people who are watching tonight and the people in the audience that I didn't hear the relative statements I was looking for from the minister and the two members; and that is, that Bill 135 recognizes the important cultural, social and economic benefits of recreational hunting and fishing in the province and the contributions made by hunters and anglers. Maybe it's because I'm from northern Ontario, maybe it's because I believe that we make positive contributions and maybe it's because I believe it's within our heritage that we should have this bill passed.

I'm not impressed with what I heard tonight and I'm sure the people who are viewing in Ontario aren't impressed, or the people who are in the gallery.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Take your seat, please. I want to say to the government backbenchers in particular that I think the opposition has been very restrained over the last hour in allowing you to make your speeches. I'm asking you to allow them the chance to have their right to comment. Sorry for the interruption, member for Sudbury.

Mr Bartolucci: I know for a fact that the people who are in the audience tonight can't be impressed with what they heard, because you know what? You didn't talk about the important issues. You didn't talk about what the essence of hunters and anglers is all about.

Listen, this bill should be law already. We should be spending our time debating something else. But no, be-

cause of your government's mishandling of this bill and because the NDP doesn't see, for whatever reason, the importance of passing this, we are now debating this and will be debating it over the course of the next two days. I say this is a simple bill, it's a good bill and it should be law already.

Mr Kormos: I have but two minutes. I will be speaking to the bill in due course. The member for Sudbury has a lot of anger, a lot of hostility. I'm not sure he's sure who he is angry at or with. He seems also to believe that we should pass legislation here without debating it.

Yes, I listened to the first hour of debate. Quite frankly, I found it constructive. It's not the end of the debate, it's the beginning of the debate. I'm eager to see this bill debated. I have no intention, as a member of this Legislature, of relinquishing my responsibilities to my constituents, to this House, in passing legislation without making sure it's subjected to thorough scrutiny and debate.

In short order, before the evening is over, you're going to hear from our member for Timmins-James Bay, who is our critic for natural resources among other things. I am confident that Mr Bisson is going to add considerably to this debate. We're going to be carrying on with the debate through second reading. Quite frankly, I think the bill should go to committee. I think it should receive the scrutiny and the input from any number of people and organizations that want to provide commentary on this bill through the public committee process so that can be considered by legislators as well.

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I say to people who are angry and hostile, who perhaps are projecting or merely feeling frustrated, or perhaps something went wrong earlier in the day—I say to those angry, hostile, little people, just let the process happen. Please, if you are a member of the Legislature, fulfill your responsibilities by participating in the debate and encouraging others to do so as well. For me, I'm looking forward to hearing what Mr Bisson has to say. I'm looking forward to my participation in this debate. I welcome debate. I'll be darned if we should be curtailing it.

The Deputy Speaker: Just take your seat for a minute. Sorry. I just want to express my disappointment in the member for Sudbury. He's usually someone who cares a lot about the procedures in this place. I went out of my way to make sure you had your right to speak and, on at least three occasions, you felt the need to interject. I'm disappointed and I'd ask you to reflect on your actions here this evening.

Mr Murdoch: I'm not angry at anybody, I'm just happy we got the bill in here. I want to thank the minister and his parliamentary assistant tonight for speaking on it and bringing the bill to the House.

Yes, some people think this bill should have been done before and it's too bad it wasn't, but that's the way this House works. Sometimes good things take a little longer. It will pass, I'm quite sure about that, and we will get some debate on it. But you know, Mr Minister, we've

got to think of some of the reasons why this bill is here. Premier Mike Harris promised this bill would be brought to the House. It was brought to the House before he left and he made a promise on that. We have to carry his promise on and make sure we get it passed.

We need this bill for various different reasons. One of the main things is we that don't want to happen to us what happened to the black bear, when we had the spring bear hunt cancelled. We don't want that to ever happen to us again in here. We don't want to be blackmailed by a group that can come in here and hold up this House and cause things to happen that maybe we didn't want to see happen. It did happen, it's unfortunate and we don't want that to ever happen again.

This bill gives us our heritage to our hunting and fishing. As has been explained to a lot of people here before, in rural and northern Ontario it's essential that we have this. There are a lot of good things that happen in our hunting and fishing. I'm a little disappointed; I may some day in the future be able to include trapping in this bill because I think that's part of our heritage also. If we hadn't had hunting, fishing and trapping in this great country, it wouldn't be as great as it is today.

I am pleased that this bill is here. In my riding we have many clubs. I'm concerned about one thing, though, in some of the stories that the minister told us. I just don't know whether they were all true or not. They were quite big fishing stories anyway, we might say. In my area we do have some of the best fishing you can find, some of the best hunting and we do have an over-population of bears, so when we do get the spring bear hunt back, we can come back up there and hunt.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate the opportunity. I had a couple of points I wanted to make earlier, but I want to delay those for a moment to say that I stand in my place and see in front of me the member for Sudbury who I consider stands very tall in this place and is very dedicated to the people of his riding. As you may have, Speaker, taken exception, I take exception to the implication in terms of the words that were used by the member for Niagara that basically said that this man is small. He's a tall man and I appreciate the work that he does in this place.

I also want to make a comment about the bill. In 135, we're talking about a bill that has been requested and people are saying they're in support of it. I want to point out that the board has now turned into a commission and the definition is the same. So it's not really something that's making drastic changes in the province of Ontario overnight in terms of hunting and fishing.

I want to bring to the attention of this House one more time something that I have desperately learned right beside my riding, and that is our First Nations people from the Six Nations who have taught us the seven generations rule. Some 20,000 years ago, they created an ability for us to understand seven generations in front of us to take care of our environment. That's not to supersede the fact that there are people standing in this place who are talking about hunters and anglers as the people who have taught us those wonderful things, and I will not

take away from that. What I will do is make sure that we are not going to be affecting in a negative way our First Nations people, who taught us many things way before we were even here in terms of the seven generations. I want to use my time to reinforce that one more time.

I appreciate very much from the Minister of Natural Resources his wonderful stories. I do appreciate them. I too have done an awful lot of fishing in my day. The big ones have gotten away from time to time, but I've actually been able to get the big one from time to time. But I will say, let us not forget our First Nations brothers and sisters.

The Deputy Speaker: Any one, and only one, of the speakers on the government side may take up to two minutes to respond to these questions and comments.

Hon Mr Ouellette: I very much appreciate all the comments from the individuals here this evening. I'd like to say that many people don't realize that nature's not necessarily bountiful. Nature is actually very cruel. In the Peterborough crown game preserve, I remember the biologists from that area telling me that annually over 800 deer would starve to death. There's no hunting allowed in that area. It takes an animal three to four months to starve to death. Not only that, but while those are starving to death, all the other ones that actually do make it through are still starving. So nature isn't quite what people think it is when they view things through the eyes of Disney.

The member from Sudbury said he was concerned. I don't know whether he was here earlier on—I'd be happy to send him my notes—where I spoke about the fact that each year more than 2.4 million people participate in hunting and fishing in Ontario and that each of these activities contributes \$3.5 billion to the provincial economy and supports 30,000 jobs. I did go into the details about that.

If he wants to stop in and see Brian Rammakko at Tackle World in his riding of Sudbury, I'm sure Brian, who's a very good friend of mine, would be more than happy to go over a lot of the details of hunting and fishing throughout the province of Ontario. I know most of the people from most of the outdoor shops throughout the province, having worked with them in the past, and I'm looking forward to working with them and getting a lot of input from them. Actually, I should say that Mr Rammakko has great insight into the future of a lot of the things that should take place in the North. I have used a lot of his advice for quite a while.

But the essence of the bill is found in the actions of groups and organizations, and a lot of them are here with us tonight, not only those that are here with us tonight but those who couldn't and wished to be here as well. It's not just the hunting and the fishing community; it's all those communities, those who put so much into what they get so much out of.

The Deputy Speaker: The official opposition now has up to one hour to do their leadoff speech.

Mr Parsons: I will be sharing my time with the member for Sarnia.

Actually, I'm in my first week as the Liberal Party critic for the Ministry of Natural Resources. I was quite pleased when Dalton McGuinty, our leader, asked me last week. I looked at this bill in close detail. For a one-page bill, I'm quite surprised at how interesting the debate has been so far.

I compliment the Minister of Natural Resources on his speech. I now feel like I know his family extremely well. I wouldn't mind if you wanted to adopt one more, because I think I would enjoy some of your adventures. Actually, for some of your stories, if your arms were any shorter you wouldn't have been able to tell them, so it worked out very well. But I do compliment you on what you've shared with us because I believe very strongly in families. It's always thrilling to hear of the relationship that exists between parents and their children, and I compliment you on the time you've spent with them.

I'm not a hunter, unless you count groundhogs. We farm, and I've shot groundhogs. Indeed, as a teenager—and I realize this may be a little bit off the bill, but I get some sense that one doesn't have to stick strictly to the bill this evening. As a teenager, we were camping one time in the early spring. Our parents dropped us off, and about four days into it we ran out of food so we shot and cooked a groundhog. For any of you here who are entrepreneurial and believe there may be a commercial market for groundhog meat, I can assure you there isn't. You would need to fast for four days before they become somewhat attractive to eat.

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Mr Bisson: Try a porcupine.

Mr Parsons: I imagine cleaning a porcupine would be more challenging. However, I very much respect the right for people to hunt in Ontario.

I'm not a fisherman, so it may seem funny for me to be in that role. I was a fisherman at one time. I'm gambling that my father-in-law is not watching this channel at this moment and won't catch any reruns on it. I used to fish avidly, and then I was fortunate enough to meet my future wife, who is of Finnish background, and her father is an avid sports fisherman. He asked me one day if I wanted to go and fish with him, and wanting to get on his good side, I said I would. I realized that for him, going fishing meant us leaving the dock at about 4 o'clock in the morning in an eight-foot aluminum boat because he was too cheap to buy a big boat. We went out on to Lake Mazinaw to fish and we returned home about 8 o'clock that evening, so it was 4 in the morning till 8 in the evening. That's actually the last time I ever fished. I did a lifetime's worth of fishing in that one day. After that long in an eight-foot boat—actually, after six or seven hours—you run out of lies to tell each other, so it became a very long and boring day.

But I respect that for people who fish, it is a very powerful hobby. I also recognize that hunting and fishing is a very important component in our economy.

We farm. From time to time, we certainly have people who come and ask to hunt on our farm. I also appreciate that at times when they do that, in many ways they are doing us a favour.

In our community, the area was restocked with turkeys. We have had quite a number of winters that have been very mild and the fields have had corn left on them, so the turkeys have been able to do well over the winter months, to the point where we have huge numbers of turkeys, which cause problems to our crop. We have had severe crop loss. They also from time to time decide to move into our machine sheds. What that says to me is that when we have humans on the face of the earth, we're altering the environment. So while it is tempting to say we should never shoot an animal or we should never fish, I also know that we are affecting our environment.

I think of the example of cormorants. About seven or eight years ago in my community, you would have had trouble finding cormorants in the Bay of Quinte. There were probably 50 nesting pairs in total. This past summer, they believe there were about 9,500 nesting pairs of cormorants, which adversely affect the fishing in many ways. They have literally taken over some islands.

Why this huge increase in the number of cormorants? Because, as humans, we have altered the status quo for them. My understanding of what has caused these huge numbers of cormorants is that Florida now has a substantial number of commercial farms that raise catfish. They raise them in open ponds and open bodies of water and the cormorants view this as kind of a smorgasbord. So we're seeing substantial increases in the numbers of them that come up. They're an attractive bird and I certainly recognize the value they have aesthetically and that they're part of nature, but I also recognize the effect they have on the other parts of nature.

We have seen in Ontario a ban on the spring bear hunt. Bears are still being shot in Ontario in the spring, but they are being shot by the OPP now. In my community—we live just south of Sterling—one day in the afternoon in the schoolyard in Sterling four bears came in together. That's not a good thing. The bears continue to breed. Whether the spring bear hunt has had an adverse or a positive effect—we don't have an idea of the numbers, but I know there have been bears, and for four of them to come together into a schoolyard is certainly an item of concern. The Ministry of Natural Resources no longer has responsibility for them, so it's left with the local police departments or the OPP to deal with it. So there's still hunting of bears in the spring, but it's being done in a different manner.

In my community we're seeing a substantial increase in the deer population. So what is happening to the deer now is that they are being hit on the road by cars; in many cases, a very painful death. There have been people who have literally been killed. I know one individual who swerved to avoid a deer and ran into the ditch and hit a culvert and died. So can we allow deer to continue to breed forever? The minister spoke about the problem of animals starving to death if there's not sufficient food, and that's a realistic situation. But the other side of it is, as the populations increase, the deer come out on to the road and are struck and killed, or even worse, struck and injured, and then go back into the bush and maybe die days later from it.

There is a role, in my mind, for hunting and fishing in this province. I support the right for hunting and fishing in a very managed manner.

The bill itself that's generating all the controversy really is not very long, and it's broken down into two pieces. If I needed any confirmation that there's not a lot in this bill, I would refer to the speeches made by the members on the government side that from time to time wandered a little bit off the topic of the bill. There was not enough material in this bill to debate for an hour.

I looked back to when this bill was first introduced into the House, and that was by the Honourable John Snobelen, who was the Minister of Natural Resources at that time. His statement to the House on that date was, and I will read parts of it, "The proposed new act does not change current laws that regulate hunting and fishing in Ontario and provide protection for fish and wildlife habitat." So this bill doesn't change any laws. That's an unusual bill, because traditionally what we do in this House is make laws. We create laws. This new act doesn't change a single law. The minister said, "The government will continue to set standards and policy to help ensure that hunting and fishing are managed in a sound, sustainable manner and in accordance with ethical and humane practices." That's something I'll talk more about later. "The act, if passed, will mean that the proud and established tradition of recreational hunting and fishing will be preserved in Ontario subject to law and regulations."

So the minister in his introductory speech said that it really won't change anything.

There really are two parts to it, as I said a couple of moments ago. It grants the right to hunt and fish in accordance with the law. What does that mean? The closest analogy to that probably is when this government passed the Victims' Bill of Rights. There was certainly some belief among victims that they were now empowered and they had certain rights that they didn't have before. When those rights didn't materialize, they went to court. What the judge said was that the provincial government can't give citizens rights; under the Canadian Constitution, only the federal government can grant rights, by amending the Constitution or by granting rights.

So this first part, which is a feel-good, and I and the Liberals have no opposition to it—in fact, we are supportive of it—really is more a statement of belief or philosophy than it is a legal clause that grants rights that didn't exist before.

The other part of it says that it will change the advisory board. At the current time in Ontario, the Ministry of Natural Resources has a Fish and Wildlife Advisory Board. It's going to be abolished and be replaced with a Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission. I'm not exactly sure what the difference is, so we need to look at what its role will be. Its role will be the same as the advisory board's role. It will give advice to the minister. Is that bad? Absolutely not. In fact, that's good. I have, from time to time, said that this government does not consult

enough, does not look to outside help. Even worse: when it does get advice, it often doesn't follow it. But this is a commission that will give advice to the minister on hunting and fishing. Good for them. I do believe they have a role. But I'm not sure it's much more than a name change. I don't see a substantial difference to it.

The critical thing will be: what is the makeup of the commission? Who is appointed to it? We have no sense of that at this time. Will there be representatives based on what organization they belong to, or will they be individuals, or will they be patronage—of course, they'll be patronage, but patronage based on what criteria? So we are not sure who that makeup will be, and I'd like to see who that will be.

2010

I believe it is important that we ensure that the rights of people who hunt and fish are protected. We also—and this is a difficult balance, depending on your background. I can appreciate that people raised on a farm have a different perspective than people raised in the city, and people raised in northern Ontario have a different perspective than people raised in southern Ontario. But whatever their perspective, they are all full citizens of this province.

I think it's fair to say that politics is a compromise. We need to do all we can to balance the rights of everyone. That can be difficult, but it may not be if we listen to the advice given to us. We need to protect the rights and ensure that there will always be preservation of the species.

There are people who truly enjoy just admiring nature and the animals. My wife goes for walks about five miles every day through the woods by our house, primarily to admire the animals. My wife unceasingly does a five-mile walk. I tell people that on average my wife and I walk two and a half miles each day, and that's true: she does the five miles and I do the zero. She tells me what she saw on the trip and what she brings back to me each day as she looks at the wildlife I find extremely interesting. For people who want to have continued access to that, we have to ensure that we protect their rights.

For people who are photographers, that is a very avid hunting group of people who hunt with cameras, as they describe themselves. We need to ensure that their rights are protected.

We need to ensure that the rights of our natives regarding hunting and fishing are protected. They have constitutional rights to ensure that.

I can appreciate the challenge and the difficulty of melding together all these different interest groups, but I believe it is our responsibility as legislators to do that.

So we have one group that is specifically identified as having rights under the Constitution. However, the interesting thing is that if we look back to 1982—which doesn't seem all that long ago, but it is 20 years now—Lord Denning, in reviewing the Canadian Constitution, said that the rights of our native Canadians are ill-defined; that was the expression he used. So they have rights that they want to discuss. I'm sorry to say that in

my consultation with our First Nations people, their answer to me when I asked how the consultation is taking place is that it's not. There is absolutely nothing going on now.

In my community we had the issue of walleye fishing in the Bay of Quinte and the question of how to sustain it. The government, to their credit, appointed Judge Stephen Hunter to meet with the band, the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, and the Ministry of Natural Resources to try to find common ground to ensure that their rights are respected while the preservation of the fish is taking place. I am sorry to say that partway through the process the Ministry of Natural Resources walked away from the table. The judge stayed and the band stayed, but the ministry personnel—and this was before the current minister's time, so this may be an ideal time for this to get back on track. So when the bands say to me, "We're not being consulted," I have to reflect back on the instance when they actually made a move to consult and then walked away and abandoned the process.

I believe we need to respect the need to talk to the parties. This government doesn't have a great track record on doing that. For a government that boasts that their strong point is consultation, I will challenge that, that it has not been.

If you'll bear with me and let me get a little bit off topic, I can think of a similar issue. In my riding, for the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, the Tyendinaga, the provincial government chose to download what was a provincial highway system. Passing through the reserve was what was Highway 2. Highway 2 existed on the territory because of an agreement between the band, the federal government and the provincial government that the road would go through and it would be maintained by the province of Ontario, with an absolute commitment that it would never be downloaded to the band. The band recognized that they do not have the financial resources to look after a road that quite frankly serves the majority of Ontario and is not a local road. It seems if it doesn't have the number 400 in it, it's not a provincial highway any more, and I think that's a sad situation.

But Highway 2 was downloaded against the agreement with the band and with no consultation with the band. The band and the county of Hastings are now trying desperately to get the minister to come to the table. We've sent a letter to the Minister of Transportation indicating that there needs to be a resolution to this, because this highway is still a provincial highway, except the local ratepayers are being stuck with it.

So not an enviable track record on consultation. So should we be concerned that this will be any different and this will be improved? No. We still need to be concerned about that. I'm not convinced we'll have all parties at the table.

I am a strong believer that any bill that is a good bill will stand the scrutiny of public study. I think, quite frankly, we've spent enough time on this bill. I don't see a great deal of purpose in continuing the debate. I have indications that all three parties are going to support it

but some indication that people want some amendments to it. Well, the place for amendments is at committee, so this bill should go to committee and this bill should provide for some public consultation.

Mr Kormos: Rick wants it passed without debate.

Mr Parsons: You're trying to distract me. I won't fall for that.

There is no point in further debate in this House. I really don't think there is. I am quite surprised to see three evenings set aside for it—three evenings.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Well, they don't have any other legislation.

Mr Parsons: Oh, they don't have any other legislation to do the three evenings? That's probably it. In fact, I'm trying to review the new bills that have been—

Hon Mr Baird: Call our bluff and we'll show you.

Ms Di Cocco: I think you struck a chord.

Mr Parsons: I didn't mean to get you excited.

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to vote on second and third reading of this bill right now.

The Deputy Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? No.

Hon Mr Baird: I tried.

The Deputy Speaker: And that will be the last of that for a little while, correct? The member may continue.

Mr Parsons: This actually was a repetition of the last day before Christmas. I believe it was the Liberals who at that time asked for unanimous consent and I believe it was the NDP who—

Interjection.

Mr Parsons: I'm perplexed by that, that you can be supportive of the bill but you don't want to vote on it. Nevertheless, this is—

Mr Kormos: That's not how it works here.

Mr Parsons: It's not how it works here. Common sense isn't very common in this chamber sometimes.

You've got me all mixed up and discombobulated. I had a whole bunch of stories about my children and fishing to tell. Now you've thrown me off and it's past their bedtime so they won't be up to see the stories. We have a four- and a five-year-old, and sometimes this is the only time they see me during the day.

Mr Bisson: A four- and a five-year-old? Well, I've got a 25-year-old.

Mr Parsons: I've got a 27-year-old, so I beat you there.

We're off topic, aren't we?

The Deputy Speaker: No kidding.

Mr Parsons: How many children do you have, Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: One.

Mr Parsons: So you couldn't debate this bill, because one child would not generate enough stories to fill the hour.

Interjection.

Mr Parsons: Well, it's a long story, but they don't let me on any planning committees any longer.

This bill does need to go to committee. I believe every bill going through this House should go and have some public examination. Had this bill been passed at Christmas, had there not been a block by the New Democratic Party, it would have been at committee and we would have had public consultation. People could have come and genuinely given input into it rather than watch the debate. Nevertheless, whether it goes to committee or not is not our choice on this side of the House. It's a decision to be made on that side on whether they want it to go through. Yes, the Liberals support it, but yes, we'd like to see some people look at it.

We'd also like to see the Ministry of Natural Resources do far more than they are doing. As a professional engineer, I have an understanding of what progress and civilization involves. It involves building roads and it involves building buildings and houses and subdivisions, all of which meet our needs for our population growth. But I also profoundly understand the impact that has on the habitats of fish and animals.

2020

The Ministry of Natural Resources, with its budget cuts, has significant problems now protecting our assets and resources, without getting into dealing with the future. If we look at the history of the Ministry of Natural Resources since 1995, we have seen cuts of nearly 50% take place in their staff and budgets.

If we truly want to protect the fish stock, it would be nice to have some conservation officers out on the water. In fact, I think that's one of the issues with the walleye fishing, not from the viewpoint of people breaking the law but from the viewpoint of trying to estimate the fish stock. One of the best techniques is to do it on a creel count. Fish have got to be a hard thing to count. We have cows out in the field and when they get into the bush, we have trouble determining if all of them are there or not. With fish moving underwater, that's got to be a challenge. So what is one of the easy ways to do it? Determine how many are caught and relate that to the catches in other years.

When you don't have conservation officers to do the creel counts, you lose control of the fish stock numbers and you're not able to manage the numbers if you don't know you're in crisis. So we tend to manage by crisis, because we don't have the people and the resources to determine that the problems are coming.

With the MNR cuts, the 1998 Provincial Auditor's report—and we haven't seen more money going into natural resources since that time. "Over 70% of the conservation officers ... indicated that their assigned areas were not being effectively patrolled."

The next statement should really shock people who believe that MNR is looking after our resources: they also run out of funding for their operations by November and do not carry out enforcement activity until April. That's a Third World country, where you run out of your budget and say, "We don't know what's going to happen over the winter months." They stop enforcing in November and start again in April. How long does it take to get

around the community that there are no conservation officers out there?

Mr Levac: Three days.

Mr Parsons: I think you exaggerate. Three hours. It goes through very quickly when you see these cars parked in the Ministry of Natural Resources yard over the winter months. Conservation is a 12-month deal, not over the summer months only. That's disgraceful.

They also don't know whose hunting licence is under suspension. That's pretty damning. That's not from the Liberal Party, even though if we did it, it would be right; this is from the Provincial Auditor.

"Inaccurate or out-of-date data on moose, deer, bear and fish populations." Well, our experience with the walleye in the Bay of Quinte is, yes, there are out-of-date numbers on the fish populations. It requires a great deal of resources to determine the numbers and they're not there.

"Districts making decisions on the allocation of moose and bear tags without proper information or using varying formulas."

"Funds spent on fish stocking are wasted because MNR support staff cuts lead to extremely low survival rate for young fish."

People pay for their outdoor licence, people pay for their fishing licence. That money is supposed to go into stocking, and we're seeing two things happen: one is, the money that is being paid for the licences is not all going back into hunting or fishing, which it should. Because they don't know what's going on, in many cases they're not stocking, they are actually feeding the larger fish. That's all it is. So we're hearing stories and experiences from commercial fisherman who say probably there is a 5% survival rate on the stocking because it wasn't done properly.

Mr Levac: McNuggets.

Mr Parsons: Yes, it's fish McNuggets or whatever, a complete waste of money, though I'm sure the bass and so forth are delighted at the walleye fingerlings going in there, but that's certainly not what's intended.

We've got a population in Ontario that's increasing, yet the number of charges laid by conservation officers is down 12% overall. Are people suddenly better in Ontario and not breaking the law? I doubt it. I think it's pretty certain to say we're laying fewer charges because we've got fewer conservation officers. In northwest Ontario there is a decline of 24% in charges laid by conservation officers, because there aren't enough conservation officers to do it.

It's a sad state for a ministry that professes to be interested in hunting and fishing when they're not managing. It is very easy to mess up. If in fact we were to deplete the walleye fishery in the Bay of Quinte, it would be an appalling number of years before it could be restored—terribly adverse effect on the economy in my community, an adverse effect on people's quality of life. We can do better. The Ministry of Natural Resources can do far better at the managing of it, given the right funding.

I know it is easy to focus on issues such as electricity, which is extremely vital to this province, but I do have to

say if people are going to be paying the increased electricity rates that they will under this government's proposal, they will have less money to devote to taxes or for recreation or for fishing. You'll either pay your electricity bill or you'll go hunting or fishing for the weekend. The electricity costs will change that.

Health is important, education is important, but to the members here, we need to remember that the Ministry of Natural Resources in their budget actually reflects the quality of life that we and our children and our grandchildren will have in Ontario.

So I come back to, instead of being in the survival mode, the ministry should be funded not just to administer the laws now but to get into a broader range to ensure that the habitat is protected. If we didn't hunt but we removed the natural habitat for bear or moose or whatever, we're going to lose them and that will have the same effect as hunting. They have to be managed. There are so many people in Ontario that we have to recognize the need to manage the industry and to ensure protection and survival. If it is mismanaged and we lose an area, the people who traditionally—I know in my community there are people who have come every year for generations for the opening season to fish for walleye. They have come from parts of the US, they have come from other parts of Canada. But we're talking often of a father, a son and maybe even the grandfather who have always come and it's part of their heritage. If we lost or mismanaged that stock and those people stopped coming to fish in Ontario or they stopped coming to hunt, they will find other places to go and never return. If through mismanagement we end up putting a moratorium on something for three years, we in effect have lost that commercial base in that community because they will surely have found another place to go and do it. So we need to manage that. We need to ensure what effect the growth of civilization is having on it.

We need to consult an awful lot more. This is my bugaboo on it. This ministry has functioned under the theory that they own the fish and they own the animals and they know what's right. I have referred a number of times to the walleye fishing in the Bay of Quinte, and I will continue to, because the ministry decided there was a problem. They didn't want to tell anybody; they decided there was a problem. They called a public meeting with two restrictions: it was secret and it was by invitation only. But that was their public meeting. So they invited about 20 people to it. Others found out and went, and there was evidently some controversy over letting them in. But their intention at this closed meeting was to tell these 20 people that the walleye fishing was going to have a moratorium put on in January. I have trouble believing that that really is a full public meeting, but that's the way the MNR approached it and then they were absolutely shocked when it got public.

In 1995 the anglers spent \$24.5 million in my community, coming in, but MNR was quite surprised that that \$24.5 million meant something to my community. So the charter operators, the commercial fishermen, the people

who run bed-and-breakfasts and the resorts were aghast at the ministry's intention to simply shut it down on January 1. So the ministry said, "OK, you've got us now. We will call a public meeting."

2030

I don't know if any of you have a map of Ontario. In fact, I think since the province downloaded all the highways there is no map of Ontario that's valid any more. They show provincial highways that don't exist any more, and some of the highways have had their numbers change. If you could look at an old map when Ontario really had a highway system and really had a Ministry of Transportation—

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): We'll send you one.

Mr Parsons: I really don't want you to look at a map because you'll download a few more highways before you send it over. So just leave it alone.

The ministry said, "We'll hold a public consultation meeting where anyone can come as long as they're invited." But they expanded the numbers and invited more. If you look at the map, they decided to hold it in Dorset. The Bay of Quinte is about three hours' drive from Dorset, but the rationale was pretty solid. They said, "We've got to send a ministry person from Dorset down to the Bay of Quinte. Actually, it would be easier if the 80 people from the Bay of Quinte drove up to Dorset." Bless the media. They pointed out that the Ministry of Natural Resources was doing something that wasn't common sense and so the ministry eventually held—this is amazing—three public meetings about the Bay of Quinte on the Bay of Quinte. I compliment—by the third time they got it right. But there was an attitude there that concerns me with this ministry.

The ministry decided at one stage to move duck hunting into the Muscote Bay area in my riding. How they decided that Muscote Bay would like to have duck hunting there was they put together a group of people who were all 100 to 115 kilometres away from it and asked them whether they would like duck hunting at Muscote Bay. There was no one local on the advisory group. People who lived 150 kilometres away said sure, that would be a great idea. The ministry reluctantly held a public meeting and found out that the people who actually live on Muscote Bay weren't as keen to have them come in and build a special kind of duck blind, because they had a sense that what people who hunt ducks in Ontario really wanted was a duck blind they could drive their car right up to. Certainly my community supports duck hunting, but they do not support the process of, "Here's what's going to happen."

In my riding, we have an old railway line. It used to be CNR. The Ministry of Natural Resources ultimately ended up with responsibility for it. They passed it on to Eastern Trails. Then one day they announced out of the blue that farmers would no longer be allowed to take their vehicles on this right-of-way even though they'd been assured of it. So once again we had to force some public meetings on it where the Ministry of Natural

Resources has said, "Well, maybe there is room for compromise. Maybe we'll have a look at the stability of the bridges."

So what I'm saying, ladies and gentlemen, is that this ministry has not to this stage shown any willingness to consult publicly; I urge them to on this bill. Any good bill will always stand the scrutiny of it.

I also urge this ministry to be involved in such things as dump expansions. Surely to goodness, creating these massive dump sites—the member for Sarnia-Lambton, who will be speaking after me, has a substantial issue with toxic waste disposal. I think the things coming up smokestacks and going down into groundwater have a profound effect on our fish and on our wildlife, because they invariably end up in the water system somewhere. With this huge dump expansion plan in greater Napanee at the Richmond dump site, surely to goodness the Ministry of Natural Resources should be interested in what happens on this megadump site when this water leaches into the Bay of Quinte. We've got an interest in environment from the viewpoint of humans and the effect they'll—the Ministry of Environment seems to be somewhat supportive of burying this stuff underground so that if we don't see it we don't know about it for a while. But I would think there's also a role for the Ministry of Natural Resources in this to protect the effect on the habitats there.

I also look at this government's commitment to wild-life. The OPSEU strike was an incredibly long one—an incredibly long one. It appears there was a winner in that—the government, with the number of dollars they saved during the strike. But there were issues such as students who were locked out for nearly eight weeks from provincial schools. These are our most disadvantaged students, from the viewpoint of being deaf, blind or learning-disabled. I'm going to say it to the members across: when there were days of protest and students were out of school for two weeks, your government reimbursed the parents for the extra child care costs incurred during the two weeks. But when the students who were deaf and blind were out of school for eight weeks, you offered not one penny. You just can't get a babysitter from next door for these young people. It is extremely difficult to find the resources during the day for a student who is deaf or blind. This government did absolutely nothing for the deaf and blind and learning-disabled students of our province during the strike. Shame on you. There was not even an inclination that you would in some way financially assist them. You took the \$7.5 million every day from the people who have important roles in this province and you kept it.

For all of your interest in the environment, in the Ministry of Natural Resources, conservation officers were off work. There was no impetus or motivation at all on your part until—coincidence? I think not—there was a by-election. To me, it continues to be an amazing coincidence that you settled with your employees the morning of the by-election. Up until then, the people who play extremely important roles in this province were left out.

It was the people of the province who suffered because of your ideology.

Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was under the distinct impression that there should be some relevance in what the member is discussing to the bill that we're debating. I see absolutely nothing at the moment. This is just absolute twaddle.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for your opinion.

Mr Kormos: Is that parliamentary talk? What exactly does "twaddle" mean?

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think you'll appreciate that the opposition benches felt there was a little too much latitude that I allowed when the minister was making his opening remarks. So perhaps a little latitude on all sides will let us get through the debate. Please continue.

Mr Parsons: I'll try to get to a story about one of my children before I close; it's the best I can do. We have wonderful children, but I don't have any great fishing stories with them.

This government's lack of commitment to settling the strike was in fact a lack of commitment to health, to education and to natural resources. It was a lack of commitment to hunting and fishing.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): It takes two to tango, you know.

Mr Parsons: It is beneath the minister to heckle me. I'm only a backbencher. You really need to pick on those in the front. It was beneath this government to have done that to the Ministry of Natural Resources, which protects. If you truly are committed, if this bill truly is to protect the hunting and fishing, to ensure survival of the species and to protect the rights of individuals who want to hunt and fish, that strike could have been settled weeks and weeks earlier. I think it is disgraceful the way it was protracted.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that this bill will be supported by us. It is unfortunate that unanimous consent was not granted back before Christmas. We would have been beyond second reading. There has been nothing served by it sitting on the order paper from December till now. I continue to be perplexed that individuals who are going to support the bill voted against unanimous consent. We will be supporting it but I do not see a point in going on three more nights on this bill.

I will now turn the floor over to the member for Sarnia.

Ms Di Cocco: The reason I wanted to add my voice to this bill is because it really is, and I'll give the name of the bill, An Act to recognize Ontario's recreational hunting and fishing heritage and to establish the Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission. When I went over the bill and looked at it, I saw that it really was just to state the obvious, such as it's a way of life in parts of Ontario. Basically that's what it reaffirms and it's done so in

legislation. It is also important to note that there is going to be an advisory commission that is going to be enacted.

It took me about five minutes to read the whole bill. I'll say again what the act's explanatory note says:

"The bill recognizes that recreational hunting and fishing have played important roles in shaping Ontario's social, cultural and economic heritage and that recreational hunters and anglers have made important contributions to the understanding, conservation, restoration and management of Ontario's fish and wildlife resources.

"The bill would affirm the right to hunt and fish in accordance with the law.

"The bill would establish the Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission. The commission's functions would include making recommendations to the Minister of Natural Resources on a number of matters specified in the bill."

2040

In my view, it would be similar to suggesting that ways of life such as farming are part of the heritage of Ontario, or it would suggest to me things such as what mining used to be as a part of the heritage of Ontario. Basically that's what the bill suggests.

When you hear the words "hunting and fishing," there seems to be a polarization sometimes of views immediately. It becomes an emotional reaction immediate to those words rather than taking a look at what the intent and what the direction of the bill is. If I felt that this bill would somehow be disrespectful of our conservation and, if you want to call it, our respect for our natural resources, I certainly would not be standing here in support of the bill. I support the bill because it is stating the obvious and it is time that we do so.

One of the things I think is important is that what could be reinforced—I mean, humans have been hunters and gatherers since they walked upright. That's been part and parcel of humankind. But what's important is that when we talk about what the role of government is, such as the Ministry of Natural Resources—we talk about the responsibilities of the hunters and anglers, and their responsibilities are to obey the law, but there are a lot of licences and a lot of the money from those licences—and this is something I think that's really important—should go back into the coffers of the Ministry of Natural Resources for conservation purposes. That's where the flaw is because we tend to—well, the fishers and the hunters know how much it costs to pay for their licences. If we could get that money back into conservation, into the Ministry of Natural Resources, then we wouldn't have a ministry that is so strapped to have the enforcement out there to ensure that the laws are being adhered to.

It's important to understand—what I'm trying to say is I don't hunt, I don't fish, but I grew up in a family where my father was a hunter. He had an incredible respect for nature and he also loved to fish. My dad is now 81 years old and he used to love to fish. He can't any more because he's not able to, but I learned from him this respect for nature, this respect for the wild. I have to say that I

have also come to understand that a number of the people I know who are hunters and fishers are people I have a great deal of respect for as individuals. They are pillars of our communities as well, and I'm very much impressed by the conservation consciousness they have when it comes to nature. It's important to realize that the words in and of themselves at times, as I said, create this emotional reaction that sometimes I believe is unfounded. I think we have to have a balanced approach to these issues, and I think they're important. Let's remember, angling and hunting is a part of the cultural heritage of Ontario. It is part and parcel of what goes on. Sometimes I think that it's more of an urban-rural cultural divide. You have people who sometimes in large urban centres equate arms, if you want, with violence, rather than equating them with the recreational aspect or with the need that the farming community has to have arms to deal with their rural existence and for their survival.

There are some facts that I'd like to bring to this discussion, and that is that 1.8 million Ontarians—that's the number I have—and about 600,000 tourists take part in hunting and angling each year in Ontario. That is a significant number of people. They do so, for the most part, and I believe this, responsibly, and they do so abiding with the laws of the land, and this legislation certainly does not override any of the current legislation. It certainly doesn't override any of the laws of the land.

Recreational hunting and fishing contributes \$3.5 billion to the provincial economy each year. That's significant, and obviously it is more than a way of life. It is part and parcel of an activity that is a huge part of our economic reality that exists here in Ontario and it supports more than 30,000 jobs. One of the things that is important is that we have to take a look at how the resources acquired from our licensing are actually used in conservation in the Ministry of Natural Resources. That sometimes disturbs me when I see that you have the hunters and anglers paying into this kitty, if you want to call it that, and yet a lot of that goes into general revenue rather than being put back into our natural environment.

I'm going to reiterate something that my colleague certainly talked about. We talked about the 1998 Provincial Auditor's report. I think it's important that those people who actually contribute to the hunting and fishing of this province and to that resource by their recreational activity understand what is happening in regard to how this resource is being managed. I think that's what's important. And 70% of the conservation officers believed that their assignment areas were not properly patrolled. It's important that we have the staff to be able to patrol these conservation areas. They also run out of funding, and again my colleague talked about that, which is unfortunate because the money certainly is paid by the users.

There's also the fact that many times—I'm going to say this—funds spent on fish stocking are wasted because MNR support staff cuts lead to extremely low survival rates for young fish. I come from Sarnia-Lambton, so we have Lake Huron, we have the St Clair

river, and my district also has a huge area that's rural. We have a salmon hatchery in Point Edward, but it is totally locally funded. The Ministry of Natural Resources does not give them any grants; they do it themselves. The anglers in my area consistently develop this salmon hatchery. It was in danger of closing this year because they couldn't financially support it any more. It was becoming too onerous every year to raise money that they could put into this salmon hatchery, which is a shame. Here you have this ability near Lake Huron and the St Clair River to stock some of the salmon, and we are going to be losing it, it looks like, because we cannot get some funding from the Ministry of Natural Resources. Considering the fact that all the licence monies go into the Ministry of Natural Resources, it's a shame, because I believe that the fishers and hunters who pay for these licences would expect that the money be returned into these kinds of initiatives. Unfortunately it's mismanagement, in my view, that these funds are not returned to where they should be directed.

2050

Again, if you read the entire Bill 135, it takes less than five minutes. It's very clear; it really is clear. I believe that this is a place where we do debate the bills, but we debate the bills if they're controversial; we debate the bills if we take a look at them and say, "You know what? We have a whole different opinion here, so we have to have a chance to be able to discuss the various opinions." In this case, this bill is very straightforward, it's very simple, and yet needed. It's stating the obvious. It's important that we as a Legislature, yes, give it some debate, but I believe that in spending three days to talk about it, as my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings has stated, we are going to be talking about our children instead of the bill, because after a while there's very little to talk about. I feel that it is a waste of Legislature time. I believe that we have some important issues, of significance to the people of this province, that this Legislature should be discussing. I believe this is a significant, if you want to call it, stating of the obvious, but at the same time we don't want to spend three evenings of legislative time in debating this. It's unnecessary. We should have our say about the bill, and those who have amendments to it, who believe there should be some amendments put forward, should say so at this point in time, bring them forward to committee and let's get on with it.

We talked about time allocation today. I certainly get upset about the fact that sometimes debate is curbed. But then there are times when there are bills that are pretty straightforward, such as this one, without real controversy. I know there are some concerns, but I think concerns sometimes stem from maybe not actually having read the detail of the bill. I looked at it very carefully because I very much have a great respect for conservation, I have a great respect for nature, at the same time recognizing that as part of Ontario's heritage we support this bill. Again, basically all this bill does is to recognize that. It verbalizes it. It does not actually

provide any kind of legislative authority that is any different from what's already in place in our laws at this point in time.

It says here, for instance, in section 1, "A person has a right to hunt and fish in accordance with the law." That's the case today. They have a right to hunt and fish in accordance with the law. No one has a right to hunt and fish not in accordance with the law. Subsection 1(2) suggests, "The reference to the law ... includes the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997, the Fisheries Act (Canada), the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994 (Canada) and the regulations made under those acts." So those acts are there; they're not overridden by this. All this states is that you can hunt in accordance with the law because it is considered a part of Ontario's heritage. That basically is what this states, just the same way we would use our mining as part of Ontario's heritage. There are many other things. It's a way of life; it's part and parcel of it. We may or may not like it, we may or may not agree with it, but it is a part of Ontario's heritage, just like diversity in Ontario is part of who we are as a people. You may or may not like that, but it's a reality that we live in like mining is or railroads were, and I can go on and on.

I will finish my debate in saying that I understand what this bill's intent is and I don't have any problem with it. I looked at it very carefully. I did also read a number of e-mails I received that had concerns. I'll certainly write to the people who had concerns about this bill, because I believe they may not have read it, and I will send them a copy of the bill as well because, in my view, it is very straightforward and it doesn't have conflicts in there for me.

I still have some time but I won't finish it up. I do hope that we'll have fairly speedy passage of the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

Mr Bisson: That was an interesting hour of debate that I heard from the Liberal caucus. What they're saying on the one hand is that they're in favour of the bill, that there should be no debate on this bill; on the one hand, that it doesn't do anything to environmentalists and on the other hand that it doesn't do anything for hunters. I'm not exactly sure where you guys are coming from but I can tell you one thing really straight, and I'm going to get the opportunity to debate this more fully in about five minutes. The very reason we did not accept your proposition when you cozied up with the Tories last time before Christmas, asking for unanimous consent—and now the Tories' trying to cozy up with the Liberals, saying, "Let's have unanimous consent"—I'm going to get into later, because there are some difficulties with this bill and I think there are things we need to be able to debate at the Legislature.

First of all, this bill doesn't do what it was set out to do. It doesn't give anglers and hunters anything other than what they've got now. If you look at the bill—the member pointed it out herself—it says, "A person has a right to hunt and fish in accordance with the law." Tell

me how that enshrines your right to hunt and fish. Why would you, at the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and others, get caught up in this game? That's part of what really upsets me with this particular bill. Does the minister give you any rights in addition to what you have now? Does the minister come to you and say that the next time they're going to shut down a road up in Foleyet or Gogama and bar you from hunting and fishing because a forest company has come in and decided they're going to make some changes to the roads there and take away the access, or they bring in Lands for Life, or they cancel the spring bear hunt, or they do anything, somehow or other your rights are protected? I see absolutely no protection in this law when it comes to the rights of anglers and hunters across this province. I'm going to get an opportunity to debate this. I say if the government were halfway serious about giving anglers and hunters some rights, they wouldn't have a one-page bill that basically says, "You have the right to hunt and fish provided you follow the existing laws," because that's all this bill does. We'll talk a little more about that when we get the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: Just before I recognize the member for Simcoe North, I know you're going to speak in a few moments and I want to ask you to remember, even though we have guests here and your comments are to them, that you will make them through the Chair. They don't have the opportunity to respond, so let's keep it within the confines of this place.

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to join in the debate with a comment here this evening. First of all I'd like to congratulate former Premier Mike Harris for bringing forth this legislation. I know he would like to have seen the legislation passed before he left this House, but when Premier Eves appointed my friend and colleague Jerry Ouellette as Minister of Natural Resources, I don't know if he could have picked a better person for the job.

We heard Jerry's comments earlier this evening about his love of his family and his love of hunting and angling. I think it was important that we as politicians recognize the value of people like Mr Ouellette and that he has a real background in hunting and fishing and likes to promote that.

2100

I just want to say something very briefly. I had an opportunity on the weekend to attend the official opening of a new sports centre—I guess we could call it a club centre—for the North Simcoe Anglers and Hunters Conservation Club. You will notice they call it "Conservation Club." I was so pleased, because this group of volunteers, many of them in the construction trades up in Tiny township near Perkinsfield, near Midland, built this beautiful new facility. I'm assuming it's about 3,000 square feet in total—all volunteer help. They've done a wonderful job of it. They'll use it as a clubhouse, a dancehall and a banquet hall. They built it on about 50 acres up in the woods in Tiny township. I wanted to compliment them on that, because I think they stand for what the angling and hunting and conservation clubs are

really all about here in Ontario. I appreciate seeing these gentlemen here this evening to listen to this debate. I want to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to say these words, and I hope we can see speedy passage of this phenomenal bill as well.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): First of all, I would like to commend my colleagues, the members for Prince Edward-Hastings and for Sarnia-Lambton, because I think they have done an excellent job of outlining the position of the Ontario Liberal Party with respect to this piece of legislation, which Ontario Liberals hoped would have passed last December. Certainly that was our understanding.

For the member from Timmins-James Bay, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters were certainly very surprised and disappointed with the partisan politics that happened last December. In their media release they indicated that the NDP actually promised to join the other political parties and support Bill 135. That was their promise, an NDP promise, that they would support the Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act. But when Timiskaming-Cochrane Liberal David Ramsay asked for unanimous support, the promises and the passage of the legislation were blocked by the NDP. So you have the NDP saying and promising one thing, but when it comes right down to it, when it comes down to supporting anglers and hunters in Ontario, they pulled away, they blocked it, they didn't do it.

The Federation of Anglers and Hunters say—these are their words; I'm quoting from their media release of December 14—"Failure to approve the bill because of petty politics on the part of the NDP is unconscionable." It certainly is the perspective on our side of the House that this is a piece of legislation that should be passed.

I'd just like to conclude my remarks by saying that in my riding the right to hunt and fish is sacrosanct: it's business, it's a way of life. So I'm very happy to say that the Liberals will most definitely support the bill for the right to hunt and fish.

Mr Kormos: Oh, and I've only got two minutes. Here I am, giving my head a shake because I'm listening to the Liberals. The Liberals are out there telling some folks, "Oh, the bill is fluff. That's why we're going to support it," and then they're telling other folks in here, "Oh, this bill is hard, heavy-duty stuff, and that's why it's got to be passed without debate."

I say to Mr Eves, I'm not here to facilitate your agenda. You're only here until June 28. You want out of here. You want your Hydro bill. The Liberals may be prepared to crawl up on your lap, Mr Minister of Natural Resources, and help you accelerate this bill so you've got enough time left to have your Hydro bill proceed before June 28. I'm sorry, I don't want to sit on your lap with the Liberals, I don't want to be anywhere near your lap, and don't expect me there.

It's clear that the Liberals are very supportive of the Conservatives and their agenda. Last week the Liberal House leader said, "We're not co-operating with the

government. We're going to delay everything, because you won't tell us what your Hydro intentions are." Now the Liberals, like that fish we've been talking about, the one that maybe you hauled up on the dock and it's flopping and flopping and flopping—there are the Liberals, flopping and flopping. All of a sudden the Liberals want to accelerate the government's agenda, they want to get that Hydro bill passed before June 28. They don't want to slow down this government. By God, you've put high octane into their tanks. You're the tiger in the government tank. It's one thing to be in bed with the Liberals, but by God what's been going on here tonight in some jurisdictions is still illegal, and there could well be children watching.

I say to the Liberals, we understand now what's happening. You do it on your own, though. We'll block the Tories and their Hydro bill, and we'll do it alone.

The Deputy Speaker: There's got to be a full moon this evening.

I now turn to one of the two original speakers to take up to two minutes to respond to the questions.

Mr Parsons: I'd like to thank the speakers, the member for Sarnia, for Timmins-James Bay, for Simcoe North, for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and for Niagara Centre.

It's been said by many that the member for Niagara Centre is one of the best orators in this chamber. I'm not one that has ever said that. We're not here to play politics with the bill. This is a bill that serves a purpose. This is a bill that, if nothing else, brings to the public attention the importance of hunting and fishing in our society, removes it from the back burner and makes all citizens conscious of, whether they live in a large urban area or whether they live in northern or eastern or western

Ontario or whatever, hunting and fishing as part of our culture, part of our life and, quite frankly, part of our economy. The Liberals see no point in playing games and continuing to stretch this out.

As I will repeat, there was a commitment of a sort made at Christmas that it would pass; it did not. We do not see any benefit whatsoever in it continuing through tomorrow night and the night after. The important thing to Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals is that we maintain a sustainable fishing and hunting industry in this community and we stop wasting our time in this House debating it and playing games with it. So, Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The member has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please indicate by saying "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2108 to 2138.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Parsons has moved adjournment of the House. All those members in favour of that motion will please rise until counted. Thank you. Please take your seats.

Those opposed to the motion, all members, will please rise until counted. Take your seats please.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 8; the nays are 23.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

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

The House adjourned at 2139.

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