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**Official Report  
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(Hansard)**

**Journal  
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**Tuesday 2 October 2001**

**Mardi 2 octobre 2001**

Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 October 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 1845.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FOOD SAFETY  
AND QUALITY ACT, 2001  
LOI DE 2001 SUR LA QUALITÉ  
ET LA SALUBRITÉ DES ALIMENTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 27, 2001, on the motion for second reading of Bill 87, An Act to regulate food quality and safety and to make complementary amendments and repeals to other Acts / Projet de loi 87, Loi visant à réglementer la qualité et la salubrité des aliments, à apporter des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois et à en abroger d'autres.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** Further debate?

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I am pleased to have the opportunity to address Bill 87, the proposed Food Safety and Quality Act, this evening. As we've heard, the purpose of this act is to protect the public by ensuring consistent and high standards for food grown and processed in the province.

Ontario has an excellent record on food safety, and the high standards of its food safety system are continually being updated to minimize both health and economic risks.

The Premier doesn't get on TV much, so he's decided to join me here.

Over the years our eating habits have changed. Different types of food are available and are more widely distributed. In addition, advanced technology, the diversification and aging of our population and changes in lifestyles have encouraged the development of new foods and beverages. These foods and drinks may be produced here or in other parts of Canada or in the farthest corners of the world. Because of these factors, new food hazards arrive here in Ontario. With the variety and availability of these foods, we involve ourselves with a higher risk of food-borne illness.

Every day that we go to the store, we buy groceries and we rely on food producers, manufacturers and retailers to ensure their food is safe. We also expect governments to exercise their authority to set food safety and marketing standards and to make sure the standards are met.

In Ontario, we must keep up to date with scientific changes, information, technology and industry practices and we must modernize our approach to, and role in, the food safety system. We need to renew Ontario's food safety system.

Developments in science and technology mean that we can improve the safety of our food by identifying potential hazards and minimizing risks. That is why we have introduced Bill 87, the Food Safety and Quality Act, to increase the effectiveness of the provincial food safety system, further ensure the safety of the public's health, increase consumer confidence and improve the marketability of Ontario's agri-food products.

The proposed Food Safety and Quality Act would consolidate and modernize the food safety and quality components of five food-related statutes that are currently under the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' jurisdiction. They are the Dead Animal Disposal Act, the Edible Oil Products Act, the Farm Products Grades and Sales Act, the Livestock and Livestock Products Act, and the Meat Inspection Act.

A sixth act, the Ministry of Natural Resources' Fish Inspection Act, would also be consolidated under the proposed legislation, and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs would be responsible for the administration of fish regulations under the bill. This means the food safety and quality requirements for commercially harvested Ontario fish, including fish from aquaculture operations and fish processing, would be established and administered under the same act as most other provincially regulated food productions.

**1850**

This is relevant to my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, given our northern location and the fishing industry that exists there. Currently, the Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for making sure that the fish caught, produced, sold and processed in Ontario are safe to consume. Regulations that would be developed under the proposed Food Safety and Quality Act would transfer the inspection of commercially harvested Ontario fish, including fish from aquaculture operations and fish processing, to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In addition, Parry Sound-Muskoka has an active fish farming industry where both farm-raised and smoked fish are popular across the riding. I believe that this would be a better fit with Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' mandate and expertise, as food safety is an important component of its core business.

It also ensures the consolidation of all provincial food inspection responsibilities, which will result in a more effective system. Ultimately, the goal of this proposed change is to minimize public health risks and maintain consumer confidence in Ontario's fish products. By bringing the food safety and quality requirements of these acts together under one umbrella, the consolidated act would establish a common approach and consistent standards for the safety and quality of our food.

Bill 87 is the culmination of a great deal of work by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In addition to developing the proposed act, we have undertaken several initiatives in recent years to help ensure that our food is safe and of the highest quality. I will speak about a few of them briefly.

As part of the normal course of business, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs recognizes the need for improved water quality standards at abattoirs. To address this, last year's staff upgraded testing programs and coordinated the installation of effective water treatment systems.

In addition to Bill 87, there is one other significant Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs initiative linked to improving Ontario's food safety system: Bill 81, the proposed Nutrient Management Act. Bill 81 and Bill 87 may have the common goal of improving the competitiveness and economic activity of the agriculture sector.

The proposed Nutrient Management Act addresses the management of materials containing nutrients and other farm practices, including the management of dead stock on the farm. Bill 87 includes the off-farm disposal of dead animals. These two bills are being coordinated to ensure that the appropriate management of dead stock is continued.

The proposed Food Safety and Quality Act would allow us to broaden the scope of Ontario's food safety system to cover more foods, starting at production and ensuring coverage throughout the food chain. We must take advantage of recent scientific advances to keep us competitive with the rest of the world. We need to strengthen enforcement measures to ensure the safety for all people of Ontario.

It's important to create a single, modern and comprehensive Food Safety and Quality Act rather than updating separate statutes. It lays the groundwork for integrating existing legislation, providing the flexibility industry needs to remain competitive and enhancing food safety throughout the food chain. The proposed legislation will provide the tools to efficiently manage the range of foods available in Ontario.

It will also clearly establish industry's primary role in ensuring the food it produces is safe and will define government's roles in standard setting and oversight of the entire system.

It's important to note that all of the players along the food supply chain have responsibility for the safety of food by ensuring that industry practices and facilities do not contaminate the food we eat, and the proposed

legislation recognizes this fact. Certainly in Parry Sound-Muskoka, where tourism is such an important industry—the number one industry in our riding—food safety is of utmost importance for all the people travelling to our beautiful riding.

Currently the compliance and enforcement tools vary with each piece of legislation. A single Food Safety and Quality Act would provide a common set of tools necessary for establishing, implementing and enforcing a comprehensive, efficient and effective food safety program.

With this proposed bill, the government will be able to set standards and requirements in order to effectively administer and enforce the act and its regulations with regard to food safety. If passed, regulations under the new act would be developed, in consultation with all the stakeholders, over the next few years. Full implementation of the changes to the food safety and quality system will depend on the timing of the approved regulations and the readiness of industry.

In closing, if passed, the Food Safety and Quality Act will ensure safe food for the people in Ontario and it will also open up new markets for Ontario producers and processors. I am in support of this legislation, which will provide clear, strong, science-based regulations to ensure that the people of Ontario continue to have a safe food supply.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** Speaker, I would like to thank the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka for his presentation. I don't agree with everything he said, but I do thank him for touching on some the issues I want to touch on in this response. Of course, the one that I'm most concerned about is that there are no regulations in place. There are no draft regulations in place, so really, we on this side of the House, and on the government side, don't know exactly in which direction this bill is going. The government says they're going to consult, but the people of Ontario, quite frankly, don't believe this government any more when it comes to their wanting to consult and then to make meaningful amendments. In this instance, they would be meaningful regulations, ensuring that what the people of Ontario want is included in the regulation. They have a history of not doing that, and that's why I think there is a level of mistrust by the people the member says they will be consulting.

Another thing concerns me. The member mentioned that food safety is a high priority in his riding. It is in mine, it is in fact in 103 ridings in Ontario, and it is around the world, I would suggest. Most jurisdictions ensure that there are enough people to ensure that food is inspected properly. This government did a masterful job of slashing the budget and slashing the inspectors, so now that checking of food becomes increasingly difficult.

As the government is so quick to point out, and I concur, the world changed on September 11. I suggest to this government that they have to hire more food inspectors, and certainly they have to put some of the resources back into the ministry that's going to be monitoring food safety in the province.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):** In responding to the comments of the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, let me also express my disappointment. This is an issue that really should be motherhood in this place and one that the government should have taken the extra steps necessary to ensure that there was close to unanimity on. And that's not as rare as we sometimes think; it just moves through here so quickly that it looks like it rarely happens, but it can happen.

On an issue like this, if you really want to convey that message, I say to the government members and specifically the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, if you want that message to go from here this evening, based on your comments that all is well and that the government, through Bill 87, is on top of the issue of food safety and food quality, having us in support of that would take you a long, long way there. But again—and it's been said by many people; it will be said, I'm sure, throughout this whole debate—the fact that there's so little information gives you, the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, an opportunity to stand in your place—and I'm sure you believe every word that you're saying about how wonderful this is and that it's going to deliver all that you say.

**1900**

But all we're left with at this point is the reputation of this government when it comes to these kinds of important life issues, because we don't have the legislation, we don't have the regulations, and without that, it's pretty much meaningless. You could go almost 180 degrees from everything you've said this evening by virtue of the regulations.

I point out in the moments I have left that in 1994-95 there were 103 full-time meat inspectors in the province. Thanks to your budget cuts, in the year 2000-01 we're down to eight full-time inspectors. My time is up. Thank you, Speaker.

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** I'd first like to compliment the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka on just an exceptional speech; the presentation, the delivery, the content were exceptional. I'm very disappointed in the member from Sudbury and the member from Hamilton West and their comments about the content of it.

They both talked about regulations, and both of them know—they very well know—that you can't have regulations until you have the authority of the bill in place to bring those regulations forward. It's like a broken record to hear them carrying on about these regulations when they know in fact they're just playing games. We hear it on the road at hearings, and it goes on.

The member from Sudbury talked about consultations. A hallmark of this government is consultation. It doesn't matter whether you talk about hearings and the number of hours on the road or whether you talk about consultations and working on various task forces. We've been going on over two years on the nutrient management one having to do with Bill 81. And they've been working close to 10 years on this food safety one. That's

the kind of consultation that's been going on in this ministry and in this government in particular.

I wanted to zero in for a moment on the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. He talks about different foods, and it's certainly a real revelation in this country of the different kinds of foods we get to eat year-round. Certainly safety concerns come with those foods, whether they're imported or grown here at home.

I like the way he rolled in the fish inspection as he related it to his own riding. He talks about consumer confidence, and when could that be more relevant than right here today, particularly post-September 11, whether it be in food or in any other product?

All in all, I thought the member from Parry Sound really put it together, encapsulated the content of this bill and just did an exceptional job.

**Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh):** I can't let that go by, what the past speaker said about how they consulted. There was all kinds of consulting going on before the 1995 election. When there was no money to be taken out of agriculture, what happened; no money out of health care, what happened?

At the hearings on the nutrient management—and the member was there—when the question was asked, “Would you support this bill if you didn't know what was in the regulations?” the people there were very hesitant to say they would.

I know the other thing is the dead livestock issue, a big concern in all of Ontario where the price of leather has dropped, and that's a big problem for the province, the disposal of livestock. Ever since I came to this Legislature I've been a proponent of adding value to what we grow here in this province, and we'd create a lot of jobs.

I can't help but think—the member was talking about the inspectors and consulting; the food inspectors dropped to 80 from 130 to cover this province—there are only five enforcement officers across this province, and I don't know how they can catch all the problems we have. I know Ontario is known for the best quality food. I'm concerned about what food comes into this province from other jurisdictions. I think that's where the inspections and the inspectors have got to look to try to solve some of these problems. If we don't have quality food, quality water and quality air, we will pay for it through our health care system. There should be lots of government involvement in that, because all of Ontario depends on it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Response?

**Mr Miller:** Thank you to the member from Sudbury, the member from Hamilton West, the member from Northumberland and the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh for your comments on my speech.

The member from Sudbury raised questions to do with the regulations in this bill, Bill 87, the Food Safety and Quality Act. Certainly one of the benefits of having flexibility in regulations versus having all the rules written into the bill itself is that regulations can change over time. It's a lot easier to change regulations. They don't have to come to this Legislature; they can be changed by

cabinet. As science changes, as the practices change, those regulations can change over time where they make sense to change. So that is one real benefit to having flexibility in the bill and having some of the detail in the regulations.

The member from Hamilton West also brought up some good points, and the member from Northumberland seemed to be very enthusiastic about my speech delivery this evening. So thank you very much for that, member from Northumberland. I'm certain that this new bill is going to bring in consistent high standards for the quality of the food in this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Cleary:** I will be sharing my time with the member from Prescott-Russell this evening.

Food safety, the quality of air we breathe and the water we drink are very important to the residents of Ontario, and it's important that government be involved. Without food, air and water, life would be unsustainable, and it's critically important that the lawmakers recognize this. If not, we will pay through the health care system. We know the importance of clean air, safe food and potable water. It's a surprise to me that the government would introduce this bill with a lack of any real substance and, worse yet, the mechanism for financing an already overburdened food and safety inspection service in Ontario.

During the 1995 election campaign we were promised by the Tory members at that time that there would be no cuts to agriculture, no cuts to health care, no cuts to the Attorney General's office. The budget for food safety has gone from \$12.5 million to \$7 million in this fiscal year alone. OMAFRA has only 80 food inspectors compared to 130, and the number of enforcement officers is now down to five for the whole province of Ontario. Many in my community and others think this is a disgrace.

Protecting our food is absolutely crucial. I would like to talk to the members opposite, if they're not concerned with the few inspectors and inspections that we have, about the food that we may eat and our families may eat. Recent media stories have abounded with news of illegal and unsanitary slaughterhouses and meat processors, yet this government hasn't seen fit to put a penny into food safety and inspection.

Not only does this bill fail to make adequate funding available to food safety, but all the important aspects of the bill are set out in regulations.

**1910**

When we were at the hearings on this bill, many thought the bill could be OK. When these members who made presentations were asked if they would support the bill without seeing regulations, the answer was no. We still haven't even seen a draft of the regulations, and we're asked to pass a piece of legislation without seeing the draft. The bill is merely a shell that carries no weight without additional regulation. It is irresponsible of the government to present the legislation without even so much as a draft copy of regulations that are the backbone of the bill.

This bill also repeals the Dead Animal Disposal Act. Dead stock removal is a tremendously important part of this bill, and I do know that dead livestock collectors are under severe financial circumstances on account of the hides having dropped drastically in price. Some collectors have approached me and they were unable to renew contracts. The government needs to enact effective legislation to ensure that dead animals are safely disposed of. However, as it is unclear whether or not the legislation will in fact do that, we are voting blind on this issue.

The bill also makes references to the "delivery mechanism," which generally means that privatization and downloading is just around the corner.

It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that food safety standards are the same across the province. Food safety is a matter of public health and is the responsibility of the government. You can't cut corners on public health. We know we have the best quality food growing in Ontario. There's no question that food safety impacts health care in the province.

There is no question there is a health care crisis in Ontario. In the 1995 election campaign, Mike Harris went on Global TV with Robert Fisher about the health care system and how there were no plans to close hospitals. There were no plans to cut agriculture; there were no plans to cut the Attorney General's office. We all know what happened. In many parts of this communities in Ontario, we are suffering a great deal with waiting lists to get into hospitals, and the agricultural community don't have the services they had.

In my part of Ontario, in the 1999 election campaign, we had said that, if elected, we would revisit the health care system and the hospital restructuring commission's decisions. Just recently in our community in eastern Ontario, the municipal council has decided they want to revisit that issue. It's a rural area and many crucial health issues are there at the present time. Health care is one of the biggest issues. The government has to do more to improve the health care system. All Ontarians deserve the best health care system we can have.

The other thing I want to mention here is the squeegee kid law. In our part of Ontario we had service clubs trying to raise money for hospitals, and they were shut down by the provincial police on account of the squeegee kid law. That was a big concern and they were very upset about that.

Protecting our groundwater is paramount to good health. Many in my community are concerned that the Ministry of the Environment is too quick to approve certificates of approval for spreading biosolids—

**Mr Galt:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is very interesting, listening to the debate about health and all the other areas. I wonder if there's any chance we could hear something about Bill 87, food safety?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh has the floor.

**Mr Cleary:** I'd just like to reply to the member over there that I think what I'm talking about all has to do

with food safety: the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Health. Where has he been?

**Mr Galt:** Just on topic.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Northumberland will come to order.

**Mr Cleary:** Food safety and the protection of water are paramount to ensure public health, yet the government seems more ready than ever to pass the responsibility of guaranteeing food safety on to others. Unfortunately, we all know of the downloading this government has done. Our municipalities are struggling to make ends meet, because they have to assume the responsibility for different things: housing, roads and bridges.

In my riding, many of the farmers and the agriculture people depend on the roads and bridges to move their produce to market and their machinery and their equipment. They have even had to close roads in my community and bridges and overpasses on account of the fact that they were in such a poor state of repair. This is very hard on the agriculture community.

With traffic limited in some cases to one lane, it significantly increases the risk of accidents. It is only a matter of time until someone is seriously hurt. Much of this is big combines, produce going to market, corn and everything else that goes along with it. It has also forced trucks and buses and emergency vehicles to go to different areas and take longer routes into the agriculture community. With the downloading the province has heaped on to municipalities, it is very difficult for them to keep the roads and bridges up.

For years I've been an advocate for the safety of our water, air and food. These things are essential to life and they have to be protected by legislation that is fair and not laid out in regulations that are to be determined later. You can't ask members to vote blind on legislation of any kind, least of all legislation that is incredibly important.

Another part of the bill is food safety and providing funding for necessary food inspection services. The budget needs to be beefed up, not decreased. We need more inspectors, not fewer. This legislation does nothing to address this critical area.

I am in favour of all the measures on the safety of the food we eat, and I will work with the government and do my best if they will provide some material in the regulations that we will all see that we can support.

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** I'm pleased to speak on this bill tonight, especially when we talk about safety for our Ontarians.

This bill is virtually meaningless to us. Once again, this government is trying to force legislation on small business, without providing any funding. Not even a cent is committed with this bill.

The only thing we will see is that the small rural slaughterhouse will disappear. I take it the ones who have worked on this Bill 87 haven't been driving around the rural sector too often. It reminds me of the ice storm. I remember calling the Guelph institution and telling them

that some people needed electricity. I said they have to operate their silos. The answer was, "They could do it by hand." I was very, very disappointed with the answer that I got at that time.

My leader, Dalton McGuinty, and all of the Liberal caucus strongly support all measures necessary to ensure Ontario's food is safe, but this bill, as I said, is a public relations statement by this government, without any money. When I say "without any money," it's really public relations, and for the immediate, it looks very good, but someone will have to pay. It is quite likely we will not hear too much about this bill, because there is no funding involved. When there is funding involved, they announce it over and over again—and sometimes up to three, four, five times—before they go ahead with any project.

#### 1920

I am sure we will hear several times about the tax cut Mr Harris announced yesterday on his video. Again, this tax cut comes at a very bad time of the year. We know that our economy is going down. We would have been better off to spend that \$176 million on health care, on education or on the environmental program we have. At the present time the municipalities are suffering. They have no money to fix the roads, but once again we have to go back to Bill 87.

In the 1995 election, Mr Harris said, "No cuts to agriculture." Today's budget for agriculture, or OMAFRA, is \$340 million. They will say, "We have increased our budget from last year." Yes, they have increased, but they have transferred \$40 million from last year's to this year's budget. It looks good, but they didn't use that money last year. They tried to put it aside to make it look good for this year.

Well, Mr Harris, let me tell you that our agriculture community has not seen a cent of new money for food inspection and food safety since 1995. In fact, the budget for food inspection and safety has declined by 45%—yes, I am saying 45%—from \$12.5 million to \$7 million this fiscal year. Let me tell you, our agriculture community is concerned. As the second-largest business in Ontario, it has one of the smallest budgets of the province.

OMAFRA inspectors are in a situation very similar to the environmental inspectors'. The number of OMAFRA inspectors has declined from 130 to 80, and we have more people. Now we have a population in Ontario of 11.7 million and we are reducing the number of inspectors. It's like a deconstruction of itself. I have said many times to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Labour that we were losing a minimum of \$300 million a year in tax evasion. Now the minister of revenue tells me, "Yes, you were right, Jean-Marc. Since you brought that to our attention, we have collected over \$100 million."

Do you know there are only five enforcement officers for the entire province? These cuts in staff have had a direct impact on the enforcement of Ontario's food safety laws. As I said, Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal caucus support additional measures to ensure food safety,

but not without the necessary staffing and required funding.

I was just talking to a chap who used to be a meat inspector, and he was telling me, "Jean-Marc, do you know the government hasn't got any standards in place for inspecting the meat processing plants at the present time? Do you know you could walk into a grocery store and there is no regulation about meat safety?" I was surprised to hear that. It's because at the present time they have internal fighting between OMAFRA and the Ministry of Health.

**Mr Galt:** You mean your government didn't straighten it out?

**Mr Lalonde:** You've been in power since 1995. You spoke about that during the election, that you would put in place safety inspection for Ontario food consumers, but I don't think you have done it. You have reduced the number of inspectors.

This government first tried to amalgamate our communities without proper funding, and that is not working yet. They amalgamated our school boards, and that is not working yet, as we found out just lately. They sell our assets, which the next generation will have to pay for. They amalgamate hospitals without any proper funding. The lineups are longer in our emergency rooms, and they are longer for MRIs, up to seven and eight months. What they do in the Ottawa area—they have, just across the border on the Quebec side, in Hull, what they call the Ottawa Valley MRI Centre. The government is pleased to hear that because our Ontarians that go to the other side have to pay \$775 to get an MRI. I can tell you that these people are paying that amount but it is a cost saving to the Ontario government. I have two cases that, if they hadn't gone to the other side, would still be tied to their beds. Today they are walking and back to work. Because of this government, we could have had these people tied to their beds for many years to come.

Doctors are leaving because they are fed up. Here again proper funding has not been provided. The Ottawa Hospital's shortfall at the present time—I was just reading that last week—is \$120 million, and it was supposed to be a balanced budget. According to the Minister of Health, with these amalgamations of hospitals everything was going to be fine. Now they are telling the municipality, "If you want to pay for the shortfall, you have to add this to the municipal property taxes." The people are not fooled. They said, "We will not pay. It is the government's responsibility to look after our health care." Now this government wants to overhaul and streamline the Ontario food safety rules into one central law, with one central authority responsible for this law. I have been working with Machabee in my area and I spoke to the member who used to be the PA for agriculture. I don't know if he's still here, the member—I'm not supposed to name the name, but Doug Galt. He was surprised—

**Mrs Julia Munro (York North):** Northumberland.

**Mr Lalonde:** Northumberland, you got it. Thank you. He was surprised when I told him, when we were

walking down the street in Chicago one day, that it is a major problem in the rural areas. What are we going to do with the dead cattle that we have? He told me, "Jean-Marc, do you still have problems with that?" All you have to do, the member from Northumberland, is go down to the rural areas and speak to the people.

**Mr Christopherson:** I'm pleased to respond to the comments of my colleagues from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

First of all the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh talked about safety, which prompted, as you'll recall, one of the opposition backbenchers to pop up on his hind legs and complain that it wasn't germane to Bill 87, in his esteemed opinion. I can't think of anything that is more germane to this bill than when we're talking safety. He was talking about safety on our streets, he was talking about safety in terms of the Ministry of the Environment, he was talking about water safety and he was talking about land safety and food safety. How can that not be relevant to Bill 87, I say, when this is supposed to be all about health, all about safety, all about quality food? The fact of the matter is that it is entirely appropriate that the member would stand back and put this in its context.

My friend from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell talked about the fact that there was no direct money tied to this particular bill. That's a good point to raise. It's good to put all of this in the proper context. This is a government that has decided that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is so important to them, this Ministry and these issues are so important, that you saw fit to cut the operating budget by \$200 million. It doesn't sound like much of a priority to me. So it was appropriate to talk about the money, it was appropriate to talk about the safety and it's appropriate to stand back and put this legislation in its context. At the end of the day, at best, this bill is a question mark.

**1930**

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** I appreciate these two minutes to speak a bit on what the members across have said about the Food Safety and Quality Act and the nutrient plan, which is all involved in this whole thing.

I too have concerns about being governed by regulations. As I've noticed in both these bills, I believe that the members on the other side would support the nutrient plan bill and even this bill in principle. That's what I've heard. I went on committee on the nutrient plan, and it seemed that the Liberals and the NDP, along with us, were supporting in principle that we need a bill, and I think in principle they support food safety. But then we come to the regulations, and they have concerns and so do I have concerns.

If we have all-party support from both sides of the House for these bills, then why wouldn't we have support to say, "Take the regulations to an all-party committee to discuss them before maybe they're in force"? I think, though, that we'd have to do some jiggling to make sure that the opposition does support the bills in principle.



Then let's look at the regulations, because that is where the meat of the bill comes, and we need to know what those regulations are.

I am concerned that my small abattoirs. If they were to be put out of business because of regulations that we put in at this House, then that would be unfortunate, because I have a lot of small abattoirs in my riding that do a great job now and will continue to do a good job. We don't want to put them out of business, yet we need food safety, which we all agree on.

I would challenge the opposition to talk to their House leaders and get together and say, "In principle we do support these bills, but we want to look at the regulations with you people in an all-party committee"—it would be the same as the committees that go out now—"before they're all put into force."

**Mr Bartolucci:** I'd like to thank my colleagues from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for their very insightful presentation to the House and to the people of Ontario.

Certainly the experience and the wisdom of the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh is self-evident when he says, "You can't cut corners on public health." How true that is. That's one of the reasons we have strong reservations about this particular bill.

He spoke about the lack of regulations. If the government wanted to be so co-operative and work with both sides of the House, they might want to bring some type of draft regulations so that we can have an opportunity to discuss and debate that before this becomes law. I suggest to you that that's what the people of Ontario want. The member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell surprises us all and certainly surprises the people of Ontario when he says that at the present time there are no regulations on meat safety. That's pretty scary, when you look at the potential for disaster when we have no regulations on meat safety. I find it mind-boggling that a government would allow that to happen.

I suggest to you that my two fellow Liberal colleagues have made some excellent points, some points that are worthy of further discussion. The principle of food safety: no one in their right mind is against ensuring the highest quality of safety standards when it comes to food. The government now has to show that they have that belief by providing this side of the House and the people of Ontario with a lot more evidence, at least with some draft regulations.

**Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey):** I'd like to make some response to the members from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. I believe that all members of this House, and I'm stating the obvious, believe in food safety. We all want to believe in the safety of water. There are a number of pieces of legislation that are going through the House now with respect to water. The people of this province want to be confident in the water that they're drinking and the food that they're eating.

Anyone from this province who travels to other countries around the world, not all of them but many of

them, when they go to those countries, they feel nervous about the food they're eating. The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka talked about tourism. It is so important, when you go to other countries as a tourist, that you're confident that the food you're eating is safe and that you're not going to get sick—you're on holidays for two weeks or for a week—on the second day after eating food that's bad. I believe that in this province we want that safety to exist too, not only for the people who are coming from other countries but for the people that are here.

Now, my friends on the other side have talked about draft regulations. It's an interesting observation. Of course, the regulations in this place normally aren't created, and never have been, until after all the amendments have been in. If there are any committee hearings, there may be recommendations where the bill may change, and I think it would be most inappropriate to prepare regulations until that process takes place. The regulations are prepared for administrative purposes. I don't think it's the job of legislators to draft the regulations of this House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Response?

**Mr Lalonde:** Yes, definitely, at the present time the reason that we don't have any standards is because OMAFRA and the health ministry never agreed on setting up standards. At the present time, this government—or I don't know who's responsible—has stopped giving proper training for those inspectors.

At the present time, also, the latest I heard was they were taking retired police officers to do the inspections. What do they know about meat inspection? I don't know. This might create an additional black market, because in the rural community where there are a lot of dairy farmers, lots of cattle, you tend to lose a cow once in a while to a broken leg and you have to go to the slaughterhouse immediately, but with this bill, at the present time there's no guarantee that there will be a slaughterhouse in the rural sector. They might centralize everything in a central area, but people just don't want to travel 100 kilometres, 200 kilometres to go to a slaughterhouse. So what are they going to do? They're going to kill the cow in the barn and do the work right in there, so that it's going to go on the market and then that meat won't have the proper inspection. This is what I'm expecting with this, because there is no money at all in the budget or in this bill that is a guarantee that this government will spend money for those inspections or the training.

I believe this is going to go to the private sector and, again, the private sector, as we know, is there to make a buck, and when they are not getting satisfaction with the money that they receive, sometimes they tend to send people who are not properly trained, like we see at the present time in the home care sector.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate. I believe the rotation goes to the Conservative benches. Oh, I'm sorry. Leader of the third party.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I would not want to miss the opportunity to speak to legis-

lation which, once again, the government has had a great deal to say about and legislation which the government has spent a great deal of time promoting, but legislation which I think has a rather unfortunate history to it.

I want to give people across Ontario some context. This was a government that, when they became the government in 1995, went out and publicly said that literally dozens of food inspectors who were then working for the Ministry of Health were not needed, were unnecessary, that the important work they did in inspecting abattoirs—and for people who don't know, an abattoir is where livestock would be slaughtered—or inspecting smaller meat-packing plants which were within provincial jurisdiction was not needed. So this government literally got rid of not 10, not 20, not 30 but over 100 meat inspectors across the province.

Now, if this sounds a little bit like the situation that happened in the Ministry of the Environment where inspectors of the water treatment facilities, inspectors of the sewage treatment facilities were let go, if this sounds a little bit like the situation which occurred in the Ministry of the Environment, where the government literally dropped the ball on enforcement and said that enforcement of Ministry of the Environment rules and Ministry of the Environment inspectors was no longer important, well, that likeness is certainly true, because the situations are virtually identical.

#### 1940

Let me just go back a few years. In 1989-90, to give some context, there were 142 full-time meat inspectors and 38 contracted meat inspectors in the province, for a total of 180, and there were 5.8 million livestock inspected by those inspectors and about 300 abattoirs to be inspected.

By 1994-95, there were 103 full-time inspectors, there were 79 contract inspectors, for a total of 182, and there were 288 abattoirs to be inspected.

In 1995-96, there were 90 full-time inspectors and 85 contractors, for 175 total, and 8.8 million head of livestock inspected at 279 abattoirs; that worked out to 177,000 hours of inspection.

But the next year, the number of full-time inspectors was cut in half, from 90 to 42. The next year, 1997-98, the number of full-time inspectors was cut from 42 to 13, and by 1998-99, the government had cut it to seven; only seven full-time meat inspectors, 132 contract inspectors, for a total of 139. Keep in mind, just a couple of years before that there'd been a total of 180, and there were still 235 abattoirs.

By the next year, 1999-2000, eight full-time inspectors, 123 contractors, so a total of 131—so it has been cut again—the number has gone up from 5.8 million head of livestock to 9.9 million head of livestock; still 240 abattoirs, and the number of inspection hours has been cut to 132,000.

So the context for people across Ontario is this: this is a government that didn't believe that it was important to inspect the meat that you eat—whether it's pork or beef or poultry or perhaps some other kind of game. It hon-

estly didn't believe it was important to inspect, and so they cut the number of full-time inspectors from over 103, when they took government, to eight. Despite the fact that there was more livestock to be inspected, they had to dramatically curtail the number of inspections that were being done.

Then there's the issue of dairy inspection. Now, I understand that dairy inspection is to be done by federally appointed inspectors, but there's still room here for provincial inspection. There again, the number of full-time inspectors was cut; in fact it was totally privatized. So where there had been eight, it was totally privatized.

Horticultural inspectors: anybody who has gone to a vegetarian store or vegetarian shop will understand that E coli bacteria don't just live on meat or poultry; E coli can also attach to vegetable products. So inspecting vegetable products properly is also an important function here in terms of protecting people's health.

Well, what happened there? The number of inspectors there was cut from 18 full-time, 246 contract—that was a total of 268—to six full-time, five seasonal: a total of 11; from 268 to 11. Obviously this government doesn't think, once again, that ensuring that the food we eat is safe, ensuring that the food we eat is properly dealt with in order to ensure our health and our safety. This government doesn't consider that important.

The government is going to say, oh, but that's why they're introducing this bill. They're introducing this bill because just as with the events at Walkerton, once Walkerton happened, a few warning bells went off inside the government and people started to worry: "You know, we could literally, this government, be playing with fire, could be playing with people's health by not having enough inspection."

But before that happened, there was a whole list of other events. For example, last fall the Toronto Star did some excellent investigative reporting into illegal abattoirs and raised the issue of poor inspection levels for the public to see. In those reports we learned that the province's meat inspection system raises the same questions as water quality. Poor water quality, the government not ensuring water quality, the government not having enough inspectors to go out there and inspect water treatment plants and sewage treatment plants we have learned can kill people and can render thousands of people very ill.

The Toronto Star exposé showed that the province's meat inspection system, or lack thereof, raised the same questions as polluted water. What we learned from that Toronto Star exposé was that thousands of animals each year were being gutted in makeshift illegal slaughterhouses that weren't inspected at all. Not only were there not enough inspectors out there to inspect the provincially licensed slaughterhouses and provincially licensed abattoirs, not only were there not enough inspectors to do that work, but even more serious, there weren't enough inspectors out there to shut down the illegal slaughterhouses, the slaughterhouses that were operating completely outside the law and potentially were observing

absolutely no health and safety regulations. So thousands of animals each year were being gutted in makeshift, illegal slaughterhouses that weren't inspected.

The other point we learned from that Toronto Star exposé is that there simply weren't enough meat inspectors to handle the job. We learned that since 1995, so-called mobile inspectors were cut down to four from seven. We learned that numerous complaints from the public had been made to the Ministry of Agriculture about illegal slaughter operations and about illegal meats being marketed, and the ministry had made little if any effort to stop it or do anything about it. We also learned of several illegal slaughterhouses which the Ministry of Agriculture inspectors apparently knew about but had never inspected, I gather simply because they had too many other things on their plate.

We learned from that exposé that the sales of illegal meat were rising and that this government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, made absolutely no moves to act on illegal meat shops, no moves whatsoever, until after the Toronto Star had published its powerful exposé, that without the Toronto Star exposé, this government was prepared literally to turn a blind eye to the complaints that were coming from consumers, to complaints that were coming from legitimate slaughterhouses, about illegal operations that were existing totally outside the law and operations that were marketing meat that had not been inspected whatsoever. That's what has led to this.

In the aftermath of Walkerton, where people died, in the aftermath of that tragedy where thousands of people were rendered very seriously ill, something that may affect them for the rest of their lives, in the aftermath of the Toronto Star exposé, this government realized that they've got a problem, that they had to come up with some kind of response. The response is this bill. They call it Bill 87, the Food Safety and Quality Act.

#### 1950

I just want to point out a few things about this legislation. What we were looking for when the government brought forward this legislation was a clear blueprint which was going to establish the regulatory regime. The regulatory regime would be clear for all to see. We wanted to see a clear blueprint which would establish what the enforcement mechanisms were going to be. We wanted to see a clear blueprint which would set out, at least in rough estimates, what it would cost to implement this and what the government's strategy was to put in place the required number of inspectors to ensure that those inspectors were well trained, that they were up to date with the law, that they were held accountable and that they had clear standards to operate by. So we were looking for those things because that's what you would want, after all, in a strategy that is supposed to protect people from unsafe or tainted meat. That's what you'd want in a strategy which is to ensure that the meat we eat, the agricultural products we eat, are properly inspected and have been certified as being healthy and safe for human consumption.

Alas, when New Democrats looked for that strategy, when we looked for those details, none of them was

there. In fact, there is no regime set out in this bill. There is no clear set of standards. There is nothing that would allow you to say, "I see how it's going to be done. I see what the standards are going to be. I see what the training is going to be for the inspectors. I see the accountability framework for those inspectors. I see how it's going to be paid for etc." None of that is there. In fact, this legislation is an empty shell. It's what you call enabling legislation. The standards are not set out. The enforcement regime is not set out. In fact, what you're told when you look at the bill is that all of those things, the meat of it, the important part of it, will come out in regulations.

This is like having a very serious health and safety problem, and then the government comes out and says, "Oh, we've got a bill, but don't look at the bill too carefully because there's not really any detail to it. There's not really any strategy to it. There's not really any accountability framework to it. It's merely enabling legislation." At some point in the future the government might pass regulations, and those regulations might deal with an enforcement strategy, they might deal with training and how meat inspectors are to be brought up to speed, they might deal with the accountability regime, they might set out other things; you don't know.

What does this mean? It means for all those consumers across Ontario, especially in rural Ontario, who might go to a small abattoir to purchase meat—and it's the smaller abattoirs that are provincially licensed—it means for all those people who might be going into small meat shops and buying meat, that they have no idea if the meat in question has been properly inspected, and they have no idea if in the future it's going to be properly inspected. People have no idea if this bill is going to address the very serious problem that was identified by the Toronto Star exposé.

The government touts this in their press release, in their usual bombast, in their usual propaganda spin, as modernizing Ontario's food safety system, as bringing it to a world-class level. But I say again that there is absolutely nothing in the legislation that supports those assertions, especially given that the real details, if there are any, will only come in regulations, which might or might not be made public at some future date.

They say that the regulations will establish food safety standards aimed at eliminating, reducing or controlling the risks to food safety at any point along the food system continuum, but there is nothing in this bill that will allow you to test that.

Now get this. This is what people really need to be aware of. Instead of having an enforcement regime, one which says, "This is how meat inspectors will be trained, this is the accountability framework they will have to respond to and this is basically how this strategy will work," instead of having any of those things, what it says is that it allows for alternative delivery of inspection and other services. What does that mean? For people at home, what it means is that the government can take something as important to your health and safety as meat inspection and turn it over to a private agency, which is much more

interested in how much money they can make than in doing proper, up-to-standard inspections. That's what it means.

It means that once you get through the propaganda spin, the government can simply turn this over to a private agency that is not accountable to the people of Ontario, that cannot be held accountable to the people of Ontario, that would simply have a contract with the government that says, "If you inspect this many times, you'll get paid this much," and that's it. That is what this government calls modernizing. That is what this government calls having a world-class system of inspection for food safety.

It says that penalties will be higher for those who violate food safety laws and get caught. As we've already exposed here and as the Toronto Star has exposed, in fact what has been happening under this government, and what was happening under this government, is that you're having all kinds of illegal abattoirs operating, you're having meat come on the market in terms of food stores and otherwise that had not been inspected, and no one knew if it was healthy or safe. We already know that this was a government that was turning a blind eye to the fact that there were illegal abattoirs operating out there. They are saying now that penalties will be higher for those who violate food safety laws and get caught. But with no assurances of enforcement, with no assurances that this government has suddenly changed its attitude and is going to take this seriously, I don't think there is any guarantee to the public whatsoever that this is going to result in a higher standard of food safety and food inspection.

It says that inspectors will have great powers to determine the source of food contamination, which will hopefully eliminate a food safety risk, but could simply act as a forensic science exercise after the fact. What that means is, yes, after people have suffered food poisoning, these inspectors will have a great deal of power. But what we want to know is, will there be enough of them? Will they be operating at a sufficiently high standard? Will the regulations and the legislation set out a regime which will prevent—not catch people after the fact—unsafe, unhealthy food from reaching the market?

Just a few comments about what the government said in its press releases and then again how this legislation fails to measure up: OMAFRA, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, in their policy statements has said that their regulatory regime, their mode of doing food inspection, should be transparent; it should be fully transparent. What that means is that people should be able to understand it throughout, people should see what the accountability level is, people should be able to see how it's going to be enforced and people should see very clearly how this is going to work. But just looking at it for a second, you can see that this doesn't even measure up to what the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' expectations are, or what they say their standards ought to be, because so much is left to regulation.

2000

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I was just wondering if there is a quorum here at the moment.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs Bountrogianni):** Is there a quorum?

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** Quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Leader of the third party.

**Mr Hampton:** This legislation, this regime, fails OMAFRA's own internal test of not being transparent, such that the public can easily understand it.

The second issue which I think people need to be aware of is this, and I want to refer specifically to Walkerton: in Walkerton, the government essentially closed down the government labs for the testing of water. This government said that there was no need for government labs to be there any more; there was no need for government testing of water. They said that the private testing of water would do the job, that the private testing of water would be acceptable. I want people across Ontario to reflect on that, because one of the things that happened at Walkerton, and it has pretty clearly been established on the record now, is that the private labs that were supposed to be doing the testing of Walkerton's water first of all failed in terms of some of the tests they were doing, and then, when they did determine that there were pollutants present in the water, failed to notify the medical officer of health and failed to notify the people in the Ministry of the Environment who should have been notified in order to take corrective action.

You would think that a government would have learned a lesson from that. You would think that a government would have learned that privatizing such a service that is so essential to people's health and safety is a very risky thing to do. But what do we find here? No, the government is going to repeat, if you look at the terms of this legislation, that awful exercise. Something which is an essential ingredient in terms of guaranteeing the health and the safety of the food we eat, this government is going to turn that over to private companies that, frankly, are not accountable to the people of Ontario, are not even accountable to this Legislature, because what they insist on in their contracts is that their contracts not be exposed, that their contracts not be open to public accountability and to public analysis. So this government is prepared once again to take huge risks with people's health and safety. It's right here in this legislation, which this government claims is going to modernize and give us a world-class system of food inspection.

I pointed out earlier that part of the problem was that this government laid off, got rid of, so many food inspectors in its first three years in office. It just laid off, got rid of, literally dozens of food inspectors. One of the things the public would want to see is that this legislation will ensure that those food inspectors are brought back

and that this legislation will ensure that this proper level of inspection is maintained. You can search in vain in this legislation. You can search all day long. The reality is that you will find no such guarantee at all.

So what's really here? I think what we have to admit is that there's not much here. If you can't guarantee that the 200-some food inspectors who were laid off are not going to be returned, if you can't guarantee that there's going to be some level of accountability and some regime of accountability for those food inspectors, if you can't guarantee the public that in terms of their training and their knowledge curve there's going to be a certain standard reached and maintained, there's really not much here other than an empty shell of a bill. That, I would suggest to people, is what we have here.

Now, there have been other examples of this. There have been other examples of what this government is doing. If you go back to the days of Ronald Reagan in the United States in the 1980s, similar things happened. The Reagan government got rid of a number of food inspectors, they got rid of a number of safety inspectors generally and then when they got caught, when some things started to go awry in terms of people's health and safety, what the Reagan government did was bring in new legislation. They would announce that legislation and there would be lots of press conferences and there would be all kinds of advertising campaigns and the legislation would be passed. But if you came along six months later what you'd discover is that there was absolutely no regime whatsoever for the implementation of the legislation, there was absolutely no regime whatsoever for the enforcement, and what's more, there was no budget. In other words, they would pass a law, hope to distract the public but provide no implementation strategy, no enforcement regime and no budget to do anything with.

I would have thought that by this point in time, the government would be able to come forward with a detailed plan—after all, this legislation was introduced some months ago—saying, “This is what we believe it will cost to bring food inspection up to a level which is necessary to guarantee the public's health and safety. This is what we believe will be required in terms of training for inspectors. This is what we believe will be required in terms of an implementation and an administration budget and an enforcement budget.” If the government were really serious, they'd be able to do that. They would be able to present that to us. In fact, nothing—nothing of the sort. So my fear is that what this government is really doing here is simply announcing another shell piece of legislation but they have absolutely no intention of bringing on the number of food inspectors who would be necessary; they have absolutely no intention of engaging in the level of training that's needed; they have no intention of putting together an enforcement budget or an enforcement regime or an implementation strategy or an administrative budget. In other words, like Ronald Reagan, it will be a lot of hoopla, some press releases, perhaps an advertising campaign on radio or television or in the newspapers, but that's about it.

I want to turn just for a minute to some of the other problems that happen, some of the other examples of problems that happen when governments privatize services that the public needs and the public depends on with little care for the public safety or the standards that the public needs if the system is to operate safely. I want to use as an example a government that this government is very close to. In fact, this government often stands up and says wonderful things about the Thatcher government in Great Britain. This is an example that I think some people will be familiar with. One of the things that the Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain privatized, got rid of, said, “You really don't need government to operate this. You really don't need government standards of service,” was in fact passenger rail. They turned passenger rail over to the private sector.

#### 2010

The problem just about everywhere is that whether they're commuter services from suburbs into the city or from suburban cities into the main city, no matter what, passenger rail services virtually nowhere in the world make a profit. The reason is because it is not so much something that you can charge a fee for that is quite high. If you're going to charge a fee that is quite high people will find other means of transportation. But the other means of transportation might pollute more or they might do other damage to the environment or they simply might congest the highways. So as a rule anywhere you go in the world passenger rail service does not generate a profit.

Nonetheless, they said, “Oh, no, this doesn't need to be a public service. We'll privatize it.” So they sold off passenger rail services to a series of private companies. The private companies were in it for money. What they wanted at the end of the year was to get a 15% profit, a 17% profit, a 20% profit. What they found in Britain was that the private operators were quite willing to let the standards decline—the safety standards—they were quite willing to reduce the amount of maintenance—they weren't doing the maintenance work on their signal systems, their tracks, their cars etc—all because they were more interested in the pursuit of profit than they were interested in guaranteeing the public's health and safety.

What happened in Britain after about six or seven years of that? I can tell you: there have been several very serious train wrecks in Britain, very serious train wrecks. Literally dozens of people have been killed and well in excess of 200 or 300 people have been seriously hurt. Why? Once again, because the government didn't believe that that service the public depends upon merited high standards, didn't believe that it should be operated as a public service with very high accountability levels to Parliament and very high accountability levels to the public as a whole. They simply said, “Oh, anybody can operate this.” Well, “anybody” turned out to be somebody who was more interested in profit and less interested in public safety.

I say again, that's what this government, if you read this legislation, is prepared to do here. Notwithstanding the very bad experiences in the recent past in terms of the private testing of water, they are prepared to sacrifice again the public interest, public health and public safety. And they're prepared to let a corporation which is more interested in profit than they are interested in public health and public safety take over the operation.

There's another element of this which needs examination, and the government so far as I can see has tried to stay completely away from this other issue which I want to mention. The other issue is particularly relevant when the government says they're going to modernize the food inspection system, they're going to create a very modern, a very state-of-the-art food inspection system. If we're talking about modernization, then it would seem to me that any food inspection system has to take into account the issue of genetically engineered foods.

Genetic engineering of foods is, after all, a very modern technique. It is something that has only become part of people's food experience in the last four or five years. So you would think that if a government is going to advertise, if they're going to promote their legislation as being modern, state-of-the-art and putting together a world-class food inspection system, you would expect that this food inspection system would be prepared to deal with the issue of genetically engineered food. But what does this legislation have to say about genetically engineered food? Nothing—not even mentioned, not even discussed.

I want to refer to some of those people out there who are looking at the issue of genetically engineered food. I want to refer to David Suzuki, well known to Canadians, who is a geneticist and a professor at the Sustainable Development Research Institute at the University of British Columbia. This is what Professor Suzuki has to say: "Genetically engineered food involves a revolutionary kind of technology, and it is far too early to know whether there are any health hazards from eating it." He then goes on to say, "People have a right to choose whether or not to be part of this experiment, and labelling" genetically engineered foods "gives them the choice."

I think people in Ontario would like to know if the food they're eating is genetically engineered, if the food they're eating has somehow been genetically manipulated. I think people in Ontario would like to know, and frankly I think they ought to be able to know, whether or not the food they're eating has been, as I say, genetically engineered and genetically manipulated. I would think any legislation which holds itself out as being very modern, state-of-the-art, world-class legislation to ensure the health and the safety of food would deal with that.

I want to dwell just for a moment on what Professor Suzuki has said, and also what Dr Warren Bell, president of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, has to say. He says, "So far, genetically engineered food crops have been developed without any input from an increasingly wary public, and against some very

detailed criticism from respected scientists." Then he goes on to say, "With mandatory labelling, corporations that promote genetically engineered foods will be forced to pay attention to those concerns" of food consumers.

There's nothing in this legislation about that. Apparently, this government doesn't believe that people across Ontario need to know that some of the food they may be eating has been genetically engineered or genetically manipulated. Apparently, this government doesn't believe that genetic engineering or genetic manipulation of our food has a safety or a health concern. Apparently, this government doesn't even think that people across Ontario deserve to know anything about this. That's quite incredible in the modern context.

For my part, I am not an expert on these issues. I wish that in presenting this legislation, the government had set out some parameters for genetically engineered food. I wish that, let us say, over the summer we had had the opportunity to bring in some scientists, some geneticists, to explore the issue of genetically engineered food and what the potential health and safety effects might be for people across Ontario, might be for people who eat genetically engineered or manipulated food. Nothing.

At the very least, I think people should know whether or not the food they're eating has been genetically engineered or genetically manipulated. There's nothing in this legislation whatsoever to provide people with that information. Yet the government says this legislation will give Ontario a modern, state-of-the-art, world-class food safety inspection and insurance system. Given all of the gaps, given all of the cracks and holes that I've identified in this legislation, I doubt very much that many people out there can have a lot of faith that this government is going to take these issues seriously, that this government is going to address them.

#### 2020

The reason this is important, particularly the genetically engineered aspects, is that genetic engineering of food, as Dr Suzuki points out, is a very new thing. It involves revolutionary kinds of technology. There is a lot of debate—in fact, there's a lot of vigorous debate—within the scientific community about where genetically engineered foods will take us, what the ultimate impacts might be on the ecosystem, what the ultimate impacts might be on people. I think people ought to know about that. I think that ought to be something that, if not fully covered in this legislation, at least the requirement for labelling ought to be covered, if we're truly serious about having a modern, state-of-the-art, world-class system for the inspection of food from the perspective of health and safety and for ensuring that people can count on the food they're eating to be healthy, to be safe and not to have either short-term or long-term negative implications for their health.

Just to complete my discussion, I want to point out to people how widespread the concerns generally about food safety are and how serious they've been. For example, this is an article from the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, Saturday, November 18, 2000. The headline is,

“Meat Inspections Need Beefing Up.” The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is responsible for the smaller abattoirs; they’re called provincially inspected abattoirs. The article points out that lower standards and less vigilant inspection have applied. It goes on to point out that there are some big gaps in the provincially sponsored system of food inspection. Then it goes on to point out, again in the context of Walkerton, how important it is for this to be done right, to be done well and not to be compromised in any way. It’s an excellent article. It actually goes out and talks to people who are buying meat. It actually, as I understand it, does some work in terms of taking the meat that people have purchased and doing further tests on it to ensure that it does meet standards.

In the final part of the article, it points out that when the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Ontario was confronted with the fact that there was a serious problem, a number of these small abattoirs closed. One authority from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs actually admits in the article—he basically says, “I don’t think we closed these plants; I don’t think we actually went out there and inspected them and closed them. We may have closed a few of them. But what really happened is some of them may have closed up because they became worried about the potential for food contamination; they became worried in their own right about how serious the problems might be.” But it’s very clear from reading the article that a number of these smaller abattoirs which were operating outside the law did not close down because the Ministry of Agriculture and Food was there; they got scared on their own. That was an article in the Kitchener paper.

Then there’s the Hamilton Spectator. This is an article from September 7, 2000, and the headline is, “Illegal Abattoir Causing a Stink: Neighbour Complained Wells Contaminated by E Coli.” It details the problem in Hamilton. It details what was going on there. So that was another article. Keep in mind that this all happened after the government substantially reduced the number of food inspectors. This all happened after the government decided that keeping a number of well-trained, experienced food inspectors wasn’t necessary in Ontario.

As I mentioned, there were a series of articles in the Toronto Star—Saturday, November 18, headline: “Serious Problems in Some Meat Plants; Yet Province Rarely Hands Out Tough Penalties to Offenders.” Then it details the number of plants in and around the Toronto area and the problems with those small abattoirs and, frankly, how absent the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs was on these issues. Let me just give you some examples.

The article refers to a most recent audit in November 1999. It says, “The most recent audit available, in November 1999, found 122 infractions, 43 of them critical, including ‘Head and neck are skinned while the carcass is on the floor,’ ‘Meat that has not been inspected and approved is received in plant,’ and ‘Equipment and utensils used are not sanitary.’” This was going on. This is the kind of stuff that has been going on.

Let me refer to yet another article, and this again is from the Hamilton Spectator, Monday, November 20, 2000, and it is headlined, “Illegal Meat on Our Tables,” and then the subheadline, “Tainted Meat.” The article starts out by saying, “How safe is the meat you are eating? Government inspectors say the city of Toronto is one of the province’s hot spots for illegal meat. One inspector says, ‘(Uninspected meat) could be in any neighbourhood.’ Consumers should be aware of the health risks involved in buying illegally slaughtered meat.” Then it points out:

“Meat from illegal slaughterhouses is making its way on to store shelves, restaurant tables and into homes across Ontario.

“Provincial law states every piece of meat sold in Ontario must be inspected by a government official before, during and after slaughter.

“Yet the flesh of animals slaughtered without inspection is being secretly transported to retail shelves.

“Dealers in illegally slaughtered meat—some killed and butchered in blood-soaked barns and basements—can run the gamut from individuals providing custom cuts to celebrate religious holidays, to underground suppliers unloading cheap meat.

“Government officials say Toronto is a provincial hot spot for illegal meat.”

Then it goes on to detail a number of examples where this has happened, to detail just how serious this is and also to detail the fact that because the government does not have enough inspectors, because those inspectors are not adequately trained, because those inspectors have to have vigilance over far too many places, far too large a geographic area and far too many heads of livestock, they simply are not in a position to be able to do the job.

Another article, again the Hamilton Spectator, Monday, November 20, 2000, and the headline is, “Ministry Had to Read Riot Act to Abattoir.” It starts out, “Problems at a Burford meat processing plant were resolved only after the provincial agriculture ministry read the riot act to the plant’s owners.

“But ... the owner of” the plant “says a provincial inspector deserves most of the blame for the problems at his meat packing plant, which ran afoul of meat inspection regulations in the summer and fall of 1998.

“The food inspection branch of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs accused” this plant “of illegal slaughter of uninspected animals, of obstructing provincial meat inspectors, and of tampering with an animal carcass impounded by a provincial inspector. It then points out that every animal slaughtered is supposed to be inspected. Then it goes into the problems and it points out, ‘Plant owners argued they thought the inspection had already taken place.’ They believed that the Ministry of Agriculture had done the inspections. In fact the ministry, because it didn’t have enough inspectors, was not able to do the inspections, and so both the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the operator of the slaughterhouse were operating on the wrong assumptions—not enough inspectors and in-

spectors not available at the times when they're needed—and this is how tainted meat gets on the market.

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Another article, this one from the *Ottawa Citizen*, is entitled, "Slaughterhouse Loses Licence: Carleton Place Abattoir to Close at End of Month." This is dated April 19, 2001, just six months ago.

"A rural slaughterhouse near Carleton Place that lost its licence because the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture ruled it did not follow proper sanitary procedures will" still "remain open until April 30." Then it quotes Dr Baker, the veterinarian in charge of the ministry's food inspection branch, who says that the contaminated meat contained "fecal material." But then the article admits that the slaughterhouse will not be closed right away—this is April 19—it "will remain open until April 30," presumably still operating in the same way.

Again, to illustrate how widespread this problem is, this is an article from the *North Bay Nugget* dated Thursday, November 23, 2000, and it is headlined, "Small Abattoirs Forced Out." It blames strict regulations. This one is interesting, because by this time the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has been subjected to enough criticism and enough of these issues have been raised across the province that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs apparently decided they had to take some action, they had to get out there and present some kind of enforcement perception or some sort of enforcement visage for the people of Ontario to see. This article points out, "Beefed up provincial slaughterhouse rules killed part of a local family business in what the owners say is a deliberate design to eliminate small players to save money on inspections." This is what the particular farmer says: "The province is trying to close the small guys so that they only have two or three abattoirs in one region to inspect. It's so they can have fewer inspectors." Interesting. Then of course the director of inspections says, "Inspections are not bound by budget." This is after the budget of OMAFRA for food inspection has been cut by several million dollars and after hundreds of food inspectors have been shown the door—quite incredible.

What's the sum total of this? What should we gather from all of this? I think the first thing that people need to be aware of is that this was a serious problem in 1999, it was a serious problem in the year 2000 and it is a serious problem now. It has been a serious problem since the government laid off the dozens of food inspectors. It has been a serious problem since the part-time contractual people they hired, after they realized they made a mistake, in many cases received no training or inadequate training, and that, as was pointed out in the *North Bay* article, there still aren't enough food inspectors out there to inspect these small abattoirs, there aren't enough food inspectors out there to catch the illegally operating abattoirs; that even after abattoirs have been caught using inappropriate procedures, procedures that are not healthy and safe, they are allowed to continue. That is what comes out of the news coverage from across the province

over the last three years. That's the magnitude of the problem, and yet the government brings us a bill which has absolutely no regime of enforcement in it. It brings us a bill which has no standards for the training and education of inspectors. It has nothing in it about the accountability mechanism for those food inspectors. It has nothing in it which can assure the public that those food inspectors will be full-time people whose primary concern will be the health and safety of the food we eat and not be how quickly they can rush through a food inspection and therefore make money for their company. None of those things, which should be part of this legislation, are there. Moreover, at this late date, after we've had three years of problems, after the legislation was introduced some months ago, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the government as a whole cannot come forward with any indication of what the administration budget will be, what the enforcement budget will be or any of the machinery of how this will work.

Finally, despite the fact that the government boasts that this will be modern, state-of-the-art and world-class, that it will provide for the most modern, state-of-the-art, world-class inspection of food, there is not even an utterance, not even a reference to the question of genetically modified food, to the question of genetically engineered food and what the implications might be for the health and the safety of Ontario citizens, not even a requirement that food that has been genetically engineered or genetically manipulated bear a label saying so, no protection for people across this province who might not be interested in consuming genetically modified or genetically engineered food. It's as if this government is completely unaware of concerns which people are raising and which are making their way more and more into the popular press, or, if it is aware of them at all, simply doesn't care. That is astounding.

At the very least, those people who do not want to consume genetically engineered or genetically manipulated food ought to have the right to be made aware when food has been genetically manipulated or genetically engineered so they can not consume it. No one is asking that that food be taken off the market. No one is saying it ought to go through a special set of standards. We are simply saying it really makes sense in this legislation that people who don't want to consume genetically modified or genetically manipulated food should have the right to know, so they don't have to consume it. Again, it's not in this legislation; it's not even referred to.

In the minute I have left, I simply want to say to the public across Ontario that despite the bombast, despite the press releases the government has turned out with this legislation, despite the advertising campaign that I'm sure will accompany this legislation, I urge people to get a copy of this bill—Bill 87, the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001—and look at it, because you will be embarrassed, when you read the legislation, at how little is in it. And you will be more than embarrassed when you see that a central part of the government strategy is to turn



over to private inspectors the whole issue of guaranteeing the safety and health of the food we eat—the same kind of private inspectors who brought the people of Walkerton tainted water, the same kinds of food inspectors who will frankly put profit ahead of guaranteeing public health and safety.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comment?

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**Mr Tilson:** I'd like to make a few remarks to the leader of the third party, who spent a lot of his time reading quotes from newspapers. He seemed to have two issues that he spent a great deal of time on.

One was the genetically modified food issue. If he checks the information that's out there, I think he'll see that is a federal issue. The growing of any form of plants, the growing of any type of food is a federal responsibility, and I recommend he speak to our Liberal friends in Ottawa with respect to that issue. A lot of the comments he made may be valid, and we may agree with him, but I think he'll find that those issues are a federal responsibility and outside the jurisdiction of the province of Ontario.

The second issue he spent a lot of time on was with respect to meat inspection. I'd like to remind him that when he was in cabinet, in 1991 the Provincial Auditor criticized inefficient meat inspection delivery. In 1994 the New Democratic government commissioned a company called KPMG to complete a study for the ministry. I'm sure he remembers that. That company recommended that full-time positions be converted into fee-for-service contracts. The purpose of that was to reduce underutilized inspection time. I understand that's completely against the New Democratic philosophy, and that was canned. However, our government changed that, and in 1995 and 1996 we implemented that company's regulations.

I'd like to remind the leader of the third party that we have inspectors on site every day that an abattoir slaughters livestock. There are 130—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Questions and comments?

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** It was my intention to respond, as is expected in these two minutes, to the comments of the leader of the third party. But I can't help but reflect on the comments that have just been made by the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, because it seems to me that the kinds of positions he's just taken, going back to a previous government as if to absolve his government of all responsibility for what they've done by going back to what happened in previous days, has become very typical of this government. You'd think they were actually governing in 1991 or 1992, as opposed to being in the year 2001, and particularly, I might add, post-September 11, 2001.

It seems to me that if the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey wants to criticize what was happening in terms of food inspection under a New Democratic Party government, he might want to ask his government

why, if the situation was already so bad, his government's first action in 1995 was to proceed to make huge cuts to the Ministry of Agriculture. I remember campaigning with Mike Harris in 1995, and I very clearly remember him saying, "There will be no cuts to agriculture," just as there were to be no cuts to health care, no cuts to education and no cuts to natural resources. No cuts to agriculture.

So it was passing strange when one of the first actions of the new government was not just their cut to health care and their cut to education but their cut to the Ministry of Agriculture. In fact, I believe the food inspection budget in that year was cut by some 45%. I'm interested in the fact that the government is claiming they still do have inspectors at every point an inspector is needed when the number of inspectors has been cut from, I think, 130 to 80 and there are only five enforcement officers across the entire province. It's really difficult for me to understand why, if the situation was so bad under the New Democratic Party government, it could possibly be improved under a Conservative government that has made such drastic cuts to the ministry's budget and to its ability to carry out effective inspection or enforcement.

**Mr Christopherson:** I'm pleased to rise and respond to comments of our leader. I had planned to comment on the issue of genetically engineered foods, and then the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey gets up and talks about the fact that it has no relevance in this place, that it is purely a federal issue. And yet, first of all, we know the importance of the issue. Just to underscore that, David Suzuki is also on record as saying, "Genetically engineered food involves a revolutionary kind of technology and it is far too early to know whether there are any health hazards from eating it."

**Mr Murdoch:** Who's David Suzuki?

**Mr Christopherson:** One of the backbenchers on the government side says, "Who's David Suzuki?" I suggest that perhaps that's part of our problem here today.

On April 4 this year—

**Mr Murdoch:** Who would want to know him?

**Mr Christopherson:** You know, Bill, I didn't mention your name, so you might just want to leave it there.

On April 4 of this year, the NDP government, the previous government in British Columbia, announced—I say to our current Attorney General, this was the then NDP Attorney General. You probably know him. Attorney General Graeme Bowbrick said, "British Columbians have a right to know what they're eating. That's why we're introducing legislation that will ultimately require all genetically engineered food sold in the province to be labeled." So there is something you can do.

What's interesting is that since that legislation was tabled by the previous NDP government, the now Liberal, which we know covers the whole gamut of all parties on the right in BC, but under the rubric of the Liberal Party, that legislation is now stalled. What is it about the right wing in this country that doesn't want to inform Canadians that at least there is genetically engineered food involved? Why not at least bring that to their attention?

**Mr Galt:** I listened to the leader of the third party, who is also a lawyer, and I was really quite embarrassed on his behalf as I listened to probably the worst speech I've ever heard in this Legislature. He went on about GMOs. I was embarrassed there because it's obvious that it's not a provincial responsibility; it's a federal responsibility. So I was feeling badly for him there.

Then he got on to what even made it worse. He talked about no enforcement and no standards in this legislation. If I were he, the first thing I would do tomorrow morning would be, one, fire my speech writer, and two, fire my researchers, because enforcement comes under section 5, if he wants to go back and talk to his researcher about it. They just might read that piece of legislation so that when they're writing speeches for him in the future, they will know what to put in there.

There are nine sections, leader of the third party, and they are sections 27 through 35, if you want to look it up. That's all about enforcement. Then if you want to check the bill about standards, that comes under subsection 3(11). You may want to check it as well for standards because you were suggesting there were no standards in this legislation.

I was really very concerned about your ongoing fearmongering about food products in this province. We have some of the best food products anywhere in the world, the safest, the best quality possible, and that's what this legislation is all about, to ensure that continues and improves. I heard an awful lot of fearmongering going on. He used quotes like, "Uninspected meat could be in any neighbourhood"—"could be." Anything could be. We could be on Mars. We could be almost anything, but he uses that as a quote in his speech when in fact we do have the best-priced food of any place in the world. Actually, it's under 10%, and you might be interested to know we spend 12% on entertainment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Response, the leader of the third party.

**Mr Hampton:** First of all, just in response to the member for Northumberland, I gather what the member was objecting to is the fact that I was reading from a number of articles that occurred in the press across Ontario—in North Bay, Kitchener, Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa—all of them pointing out the recurring problems in the food inspection system over the last three years and all of them pointing out over and over again that the recurring problems in the food inspection system were due to a Conservative government that cut the number of inspectors because it didn't believe that food inspection was important for the health and safety of Ontario residents.

I would also like to reply to the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, whose hypothesis is this: he says that if during an NDP government that government realized there were some issues that needed to be dealt with in terms of food inspection, then the solution of the Conservative government is to fire them all and that that will somehow improve the quality of food inspection in the province.

Nonsense. Yes, in a world which is growing increasingly complex, in a world where we are seeing biological organisms mutate and biological organisms which we never, ever thought would affect human beings, the whole issue of food safety and food inspection is becoming more complicated. But the solution certainly isn't in the approach the Conservatives took, which was to dramatically chop the budget and lay off the food inspectors. That's what got us into this place.

Finally, I would say the province can require foods to be labeled in terms of genetic engineering.

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**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** Just finishing up, carrying on some of the comments made by the leader of the third party, who, as the member for Northumberland said, with performances like that, despite best efforts, may remain the leader of the third party for a long time. He really didn't pay attention, in fairness, to anything the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey had to say. The member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey explained and reminded the member, because he was in the government back in 1991 and in fact was a cabinet minister in that government, that indeed the Provincial Auditor had done a value-for-money audit of the food inspection system back in 1991 and said it was a very poor system and needed to be fixed. His very own government contracted with KPMG to do a study to look into this system. That study, commissioned by his government, said the government of the day should contract out that inspection service. Indeed, they didn't move on that. They didn't sit for the last year they were in office so I guess they never really had an opportunity to move on it. We did move on it.

As the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey was about to rightly point out, we have inspectors on site every single day where abattoirs slaughter livestock in the province of Ontario. There are 132 inspectors working across the province inspecting all animals before slaughter and carcasses after slaughter. Now, they're contracted out, so do they appear as eight full-time employees within the ministry for the government? Yes. What doesn't appear are the other 124 inspectors we pay whom we contract out. So as the member for Northumberland said, the leader of the third party is simply fearmongering when he reads from articles which fail to mention that we have a total of 132 inspectors in the province of Ontario today, not the eight the member talks about.

I think it's important, before he tries to undermine the food industry in Ontario for his own political purposes, strange as it may be, as the member for Northumberland tried to point out, that the public needs to be more informed and the member of the third party needs to be more informed about the way the situation really exists today in Ontario.

I want to thank Minister Coburn for introducing this bill. I am here today to rise in support of Bill 87, the proposed Food Safety and Quality Act.

Another thing that was lost by the leader of the third party was that before he came into the Legislature to make his speech, it was clear that members of both opposition parties were supportive of this bill, and that included members from his own party. So for him to come in and speak at length the way he did, opposed to the bill, I think he needs to do some caucusing himself, because members from the opposition benches have voiced their approval of this policy. I share that approval of this bill.

I know that for both Minister Coburn and myself and many other members, improving the health of the population by reducing the incidence of food-borne illness is an important priority.

The food produced in Ontario is safe. We need to ensure that our food safety system continues to be effective and efficient in a changing world.

This legislation, Bill 87, would set a framework for enhanced science-based food inspection and production systems, and Bill 87 clearly complements the Ministry of Health's commitment to ensuring food safety through the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

At the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, where I happen to be the parliamentary assistant, we follow through on our commitment by ensuring that food is safely stored, prepared and served to the public. We stop the distribution of contaminated food to the public and we acknowledge restaurants with good food safety histories and trained food handlers through the Eat Smart! program.

To ensure that unsafe restaurant food is not available to the public, we empower local boards of health with a number of effective enforcement methods. These methods include the issuance of summonses, orders to close restaurants and even tickets under the Provincial Offences Act. Boards of health carry out this work in food premises through mandated inspections. The frequency of these inspections is based on a risk assessment. A public health inspector can issue a verbal or written order that takes effect immediately, and actions in the order can include restaurant closure, disposal of contaminated food and mandatory food handler safety training.

An inspector can also issue ticket fines, carrying set fines from \$30 to \$105, for any infraction of the food premises regulations. In fact, the Ministry of Health has proposed increases to these fines, particularly for items related to food safety risk. The next step will be approval from the Chief Justice of Ontario.

In terms of Bill 87, the proposed Food Safety and Quality Act focuses on the production and harvesting of agricultural and aquatic commodities, food processing and wholesale food distribution. Minister Coburn's proposed Food Safety and Quality Act would not supersede the Ministry of Health's authority on public health issues. Public health units would continue to focus on food service and food retail premises. But the new act would require that all serious food safety risks be reported to a medical officer of health, thereby increasing our govern-

ment's ability to monitor food safety. We continue to work closely with OMAFRA to develop a field-to-fork safety system, as well as developing an emergency response strategy for food safety issues.

Bill 87 provides for greater information sharing with other relevant ministries as well, allowing for a quicker, more effective response in the event of a food safety crisis.

I'd like to congratulate my colleague Minister Coburn for introducing Bill 87. The Ministry of Health is fully supportive of the Food Safety and Quality Act, I'm totally in support of it, and I'm happy to see that members from the opposition benches tonight have said they are fully in support of it. As Mr Murdoch pointed out earlier in the evening, an important part of this legislation, and in fact an important part of many pieces of legislation, is the regulations that accompany that. I know the Minister of Agriculture will be particularly interested in getting some input on those regulations from Mr Murdoch and several other of our rural members, many of whom have quite a bit of experience in the agricultural community.

I'm going to end my remarks tonight. I believe we're nearing a consensus, actually, on this bill, with members of the opposition saying they're supporting it. I have one other colleague who wishes to address the bill this evening, so I'm going to attempt to leave some time for her.

**Mrs Munro:** I would like to begin by saying that Ontario's food is safe. Our current food inspection systems have served the province and the interests of people well. However, the system that was originally developed several decades ago has not kept pace with sometimes rapidly changing developments in the area of food safety and quality.

Our consumption habits are changing, our food distribution patterns and trade requirements are changing, and new and more persistent types of food-borne bacteria have been identified. We must continually and proactively improve our food safety systems with regard to safety and quality to address the risks that come with such changes.

The proposed legislation would provide the backbone for a science- and a risk-based food safety system. Ontario's food safety system underwent a full review in 1999. The overall goal of this review was to ensure that Ontario maintained its safe and high-quality food supply now and in the future.

Updating and consolidating the provincial legislative framework is a key component of this initiative. Currently, food inspections are under the jurisdiction of three ministries and seven provincial statutes. This means those food-related statutes are not as effective and efficient as they could be. We need to modernize them to take advantage of current levels of scientific knowledge, national standards and industry initiatives.

Since Bill 87 received first reading in June of this year, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has been travelling the province to share the details of

this proposed legislation. The message from our stakeholders is clear: modern, consolidated food safety legislation would be good news for consumers, good for business and good for Ontario.

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Our province already has an enviable reputation for food safety, with some of the highest standards in the world. But we can do better, and we must, not only to protect the public but to ensure that our agribusiness remains competitive. The agri-food industry is worth an incredible \$28 billion in Ontario. We need to ensure it is well equipped to meet the demands of the future. Bill 87 will help. I know when I think of those food producers in my own riding that contribute to making sure that agriculture and agribusiness is the second most important economic engine in my riding, this kind of surety, this kind of regulation, is very important.

Ontario is leading the way. Bill 87 is enabling legislation that would consolidate the food safety and quality components of six existing food-related acts. Bringing these together would allow for a common, consistent approach to food safety and quality in the province, making our food safety system stronger.

The regulations that would be developed under Bill 87 would put our food safety system on a firm science-based foundation. What this means is that we can take advantage of new science and technology as it becomes available. We can ensure that standards for the quality and safety of food products in Ontario are not arbitrary, but are based on science that has shown what are the higher risks to the safety of our food. Because Bill 87 is enabling legislation, as new science and technologies are developed, we would be able to take advantage of them quickly and easily, ensuring that Ontario remains at the forefront of food safety and quality with modern, effective legislation governing the agri-food industry.

Consumers have a right to know that the food products they purchase are safe, and they want to know that every possible step has been taken along the entire food continuum to ensure this safety. Everyone has a role and a responsibility: the consumer, the retailer, the processor, the producer. Ensuring the safety and the quality of food products is a critical issue for everyone.

Most of all, this government has a leadership role to ensure that all this is in place, and we are taking that role. The agri-food industry in Ontario has been working hard at this for years now, and it is partly thanks to their diligence that we have such an enviable reputation for food safety and quality. Bill 87 would allow all of us to play our roles more effectively. The broad scope of this legislation would increase the confidence in Ontario's food products, not only for provincial consumers but for national and international customers as well, for existing markets and perhaps new ones. They all expect and deserve nothing less than the highest quality of safety and quality. Bill 87 would help ensure that Ontario's agri-food industry delivers that.

The week before last, I had the pleasure of attending the government of Ontario pavilion at the International

Plowing Match and Rural Expo 2001, which was held in eastern Ontario. Many of my caucus colleagues, including the honourable Premier, joined us there. I know they will agree that the province put on a wonderful show for the visitors. The Ontario pavilion included displays from the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Energy, Science and Technology; Consumer and Commercial Relations; and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. One of the most popular displays dealt with the Ontario food safety system, of which Bill 87 is an integral part. There was a great deal of interest in this display. Food safety is obviously a very important issue to a great many people. In talking to the visitors at the food safety display, it became quite clear to me that it is an issue that has touched us all.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that almost everyone has had or knows someone who has had a food-borne illness. Fortunately, most of the time the illness is only a short-term inconvenience. Food-borne illnesses, though, can be serious, and if we can help make sure Ontario's food is even safer, we must do so. Proactive action is needed.

Many competing jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom, Belgium, Australia and the United States, have already adopted science-based approaches to food safety that are founded on risk analysis. Within Canada, Quebec has adopted the Food Products Act, and several other provinces are also updating their legislation and consulting with stakeholders on food safety initiatives.

Canada and its major trading partners are using international standards to guide them in the development of modern food safety standards. The internationally supported Codex Alimentarius Commission has developed these standards in a consensus-building process. Canada is one of the 165 member countries contributing to these standards. The Codex approach to food safety includes the ongoing use of science in the regular assessment of risks. Codex principles support the shift in food safety responsibility from the traditional government inspection to the producer and processor of the food, with government overseeing food safety process control systems.

Here in Canada, federal, provincial and territorial governments have finalized a common legislative base to guide us in the establishment of modern food legislation. The common legislation base is founded on the Codex principles. Its scope is from field to fork, and it provides for the use and the regulation of modern process control systems and on-farm food safety programs. Bill 87 is consistent with these principles.

In summing up, I think it is extremely important to understand three elements in this legislation. The first is the need to update legislation by eliminating the cross-jurisdiction of the existing pieces of legislation. The second is the need to have framework legislation that allows for new technologies and food science to raise the bar on food safety. Finally, this piece of legislation is designed to give Ontarians confidence. It gives confidence to the producers, the farmers, knowing that their product is going to be acceptable, not only to the consumer in Ontario but internationally. It gives confid-

ence to the processors, again, because they know that those legislative frameworks and regulations ensure their product.

Finally, it gives confidence to us as the consumers in this province and it provides us with an opportunity to make sure that Ontario's agribusiness can compete effectively internationally. That is the goal of this legislation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

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**M. Lalonde :** J'ai feuilleté d'un bout à l'autre ce projet de loi. Il y a quelque chose qui m'inquiète de plus en plus.

Quelles sont les qualifications requises pour devenir inspecteur, qui est mentionné dans ce projet de loi? Lorsque nous parlons d'inspecteurs de bâtiments, cela pourrait être quelqu'un qui connaît la construction, mais inspecteur d'endroits où on doit consommer ou d'abattoirs ou inspecteur de carcasses d'animaux morts, ça demande des qualifications différentes.

Lorsque je regarde le projet de loi, partie IV, section 13, « Un directeur ou la personne qu'il autorise par écrit peut nommer toute personne ou catégorie de personnes comme inspecteurs et restreindre leurs pouvoirs dans l'acte de nomination. »

Je vois un peu plus loin la section 13(3) : « Chaque inspecteur qui exerce les pouvoirs que lui confère la présente loi produit sur demande son attestation de nomination en tant qu'inspecteur. »

À aucun endroit on ne réfère à la formation que la personne doit recevoir avant de devenir inspecteur. Je crois que—si je fais l'erreur, je voudrais bien qu'on me le mentionne, puisque à aucun endroit, encore une fois, puis-je voir quelles sont les qualifications requises pour devenir inspecteur et aussi de mettre en force cette loi, le projet de loi 87.

C'est inquiétant lorsque nous apercevons ça. Je sais que ça coûte absolument rien au gouvernement. C'est pour ça qu'on essaie d'inclure dans ce projet de loi une quantité d'inspections, mais encore, c'est beaucoup inquiétant lorsqu'on s'aperçoit que toute personne pourrait être appointée ; on peut dire qu'une personne à la retraite, comme un officier dans la Sûreté provinciale, pourrait devenir inspecteur. Aucune qualification n'est requise.

**Mr Christopherson:** I'm pleased to respond to the comments that were made. I want to focus a bit on the issue of the privatization of some of the inspection. I know this government is big on privatization, and from time to time there are arguments that one can make that certain services ought to be.

The concern that we have and I have in particular with the notion of the food inspection, though, is very similar to the issue that has now captured everyone's attention with regard to airport security. Anything prior to September 11 and the argument was, "There's no need for the government to be involved. If this is an issue, we can do a division of labour, we can break this down into its responsibilities. The government, through legislation, can set out standards, and we'll let the airline provide it."

The problem is that of course the airline sees this as a non-revenue-producing aspect of what they have to do and therefore the bottom line becomes greater than the service. I'm not suggesting for a second that they weren't doing what they were lawfully required to do, but that's very different from saying, "The security, as the service we're providing, is the top priority, and if it proved to be an increasing drag on the profit line, so be it."

What's happening now in the United States and hopefully here in Canada, and I think our Prime Minister has made some reference to this recently, is that they're looking at stepping in and saying, "We will provide the security service," and that makes sense. Why? Because all of us want security to be done as a priority, no matter what it costs, because of what's at risk.

Food inspection is much the same. The risk is too high. It ought not be privatized.

**Mr Galt:** I was absolutely enthralled with the presentation made by the member for Niagara Falls and the member for York North, probably two of the best speeches I've heard in this House. "Stunning" would describe it. If I were them, I'd give a promotion to their speech writers, because they just put together such excellent material. They were right on the bill, talking about it all the way through.

The member for Niagara Falls talked about safety and efficiency, which is what this bill is about. He has also recognized, and I have to compliment him, how it dovetails in with the Ministry of Health and the protection of health for the people of Ontario. That's very different from what we're hearing in the opposition. When they were talking about health, they kept talking about down-loading all the time.

The member for York North was talking a lot about improving the confidence, and certainly there's a tremendous amount of confidence in the province of Ontario for the quality and the safety of our food. She was indicating how it would improve with this bill, not only for the producers but for the processors and the consumers.

She talked also about the fact that this bill was being highlighted, along with information about it, at the International Plowing Match. What a successful plowing match that was down close to the Minister of Agriculture's riding. He was an excellent host for that.

She also talked about food-borne illnesses. Probably everybody in this House at some time or another has had one, but the source tends to originate from the home and not from the processed foods. I think it was interesting that she pointed that out. She also pointed out the need to be able to follow this and trace back all the way from the field to the fork. That's become a neat slogan, Mr Speaker, and I see you smiling. I know you appreciate how it gets from the field to the fork to your mouth.

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** I'm very happy to offer some comment this evening on the debate on Bill 87 that relates to food safety. As a representative of a rural riding, I know how important it is and the impact this kind of legislation will have for people I represent as well.

What I hear very regularly in my riding from people within the farming community is their concern about the lack of commitment of this government to the agriculture industry. That lack of commitment is demonstrated in their lack of directing of resources to agriculture in the province.

You can bring in all kinds of very noble legislation that, if you had the tools to actually carry out the legislation, would probably be good. What people in Ontario realize, what they understand, what the people in the industry know and the issue that you cannot fool people about, is that you have actually pulled away resources from those very functions that would be required in order to make this legislation effective within the community.

We know that money for food inspection and food safety has declined by 45% under this government. We know that OMAFRA inspectors have declined from 130 inspectors in the province to 80. So, here we are, bringing forward legislation that will really enhance the roles of people who would be in inspector roles, and yet this government has very actively and aggressively looked to reduce them in our communities. It really is a very hollow piece of legislation, because there's nothing that goes along with it to guarantee to the people of Ontario that they will in fact be able to ensure it's carried out.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Response, the member for York North.

**Mrs Munro:** Thank you to the members for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Hamilton West, Northumberland, Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for their comments.

In listening to these comments, I think perhaps one of the concerns that was expressed is the issue of the privatization, the issue of inspection. I think it's important to keep in mind the fact that with all of these initiatives that government has undertaken, there is always the recognition that government is responsible for setting the policy for setting the regulatory framework around which people are to operate. Obviously, the question we're talking about here is maintaining a level of safety but, most importantly, it is moving that issue of safety from one which we have recognized in this province as certainly something that has done us well in the last decades to one which needs to be revised.

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My comments, then, about making sure that it's consistent with international standards, that it's consistent with the latest research and that it's science-based, those are the issues that are driving this initiative. I think it's important for us to recognize, as many of those in the agricultural community recognize, that in order for them to be competitive, they have to be able to demonstrate that their product has undergone the same rigorous, if not better, standards that are accepted around the world. It is that opportunity we want to provide for our agribusiness in this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mrs McLeod:** I regret the fact that there is only 10 minutes left in the evening sitting, because there is so

much I would like to comment on, what is in or is not in fact in this bill.

I want to begin my comments, however, with a particular concern I have, and it has become somewhat typical of my concerns with legislation this government brings forward because it seems as though every bill is like a mini-omnibus bill, and there is always something slipped in which the government appears to be hoping that nobody will notice.

In the case of Bill 87, the bombshell that's slipped in is on the very last page, page 38, the repeal of the Edible Oil Products Act. That's not something I would have paid a lot of attention to, not being a specialist in agriculture—I freely admit that—except that it's been drawn to my attention that this is a fairly significant bill to repeal because it's a significant reversal of a long-held position by the province of Ontario. The Edible Oils Act, as I understand it, is the act that ensures there is no mixing, no blending, of oil products with dairy products. What that basically means to the consumer is, when you go to the store and you buy a pound of butter or cheese, you know that it is in fact a pure dairy product, that it hasn't been mixed with an oil-based product.

This issue has been of such sufficient concern to governments of the past that the Ontario government has actually been in court vigorously defending their right to keep this prohibition against the blending of oil-based and dairy-based products. Suddenly, slipped into page 38 of this bill, we have the repeal of the Edible Oils Act. Not only is this a significant reversal of government position, but it was done without any consultation of any kind with the dairy farmers, who are particularly affected by this particular repeal provision.

The dairy farmers have raised some very serious concerns. They've raised concerns about the health impact of allowing this kind of blending. I'm not an expert on the issues of trans fatty acids and whether or not they constitute a health risk or are, in fact, beneficial to health; I don't pretend to be an expert on that. But I think the concerns the dairy farmers of this province are raising at least deserved to have been heard, that they should have been consulted. What I am absolutely certain of is that if the goal of this bill is supposedly to increase consumer confidence in food safety, the starting point for that has to be an ability of the consumers to know what it is they are purchasing. When you start having this kind of blending, it becomes very difficult for the consumer to make judgments about the health impact, for example, of trans fatty acids, and whether that's the product they want to purchase or not.

That's one of my concerns, and I hope the government will at least step back enough from this to consult with dairy farmers. Because the dairy farmers' milk product is regulated under the Milk Act, the government may have thought they didn't need to consult with dairy farmers. That's why dairy farmers were so shocked to find out that this major reversal of government policy was slipped in at the back of this bill. It does give me some pause to wonder what else is slipped in under the cover of what might be seen to be a good-intent kind of bill.

I guess my concerns are that the bill really is, as my colleagues have said in earlier debates on this subject, an empty shell bill. It really doesn't tell us what the government's going to do. It gives broad regulatory powers once again to a minister of the government. It makes no funding commitments as to the provisions of the bill, the supposed higher quality standards in inspection, monitoring and enforcement. What financial commitments are going to be made to ensure they can be carried out?

In the absence of any real meaning, we have no increased assurance in the public mind of greater food safety and we have only the government's record. I come from a medium-sized community. I have a relatively small farming community as part of my riding. I know that the food produced in my riding is safe. I know the people who produce it and I know what their standards are. I know they have a commitment to me, as a member of that community, to provide safe food. But when I look at the provincial situation, all I have to go on is the record of the government, and it's been said frequently this evening already that this government's record when it comes to agriculture, and particularly to the inspection of food, is dismal. We can exchange numbers if the government members choose to. But the bottom line is, from a government and Premier who said there were going to be no cuts to agriculture, a massive cut to the agriculture budget was one of the first actions of the government. We know that one of those cuts significantly affected the ability of the Ministry of Agriculture to provide adequate food inspection. We know there are fewer food inspectors.

So when the Minister of Agriculture introduces this bill by saying, "Indeed, Ontario's food is safe," I believe that about food that's produced in my own community, but I have absolutely no assurance that it would be true across the province, based on this government's lack of commitment in the past. I see no evidence that the government has a real commitment to changing it, other than bringing in this broadly based new regulatory power for the minister.

The minister also said that what they wanted was a science-based foundation to ensure food safety. As my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London spoke to earlier in this House, this government that talks about science-based research is the exact same government that has cut the budget of the animal lab at the University of Guelph. Where do those things match up? All this talk about a science-based foundation for food safety from a government that squeezes out the very body which is providing the research that would ensure we do have food safety.

The government has said it's enabling legislation, and indeed it is enabling legislation. I do wish I had more time this evening, but let me just give you an idea of the breadth of the regulations: "The bill allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations designating, as a licensed activity, any one of a wide range of

activities that affect or could affect the quality or safety of food, agricultural or aquatic commodities or agricultural inputs ..." and on and on. It's just breathtaking in the scope of the regulatory power that's given. In the face of that, the farmers of this province are saying, "Where are we going to be left?"

One of the other things this bill does is give the Minister of Agriculture incredible power to set fees. So let's put it together: a government that says it wants to improve food safety by having more inspections. The Minister says there's going to be clout to this, there's going to be enforcement. There certainly hasn't been in the past—18 charges on food safety violations since this government came into power. He says there's going to be new clout. That means there's going to be new costs. The government has made no financial commitment to it—they've only cut in the past—so where is the money going to come from for these as yet unspecified regulatory changes? The farmers of this province are very much concerned it's going to come from fees because this bill lets the minister set fees for virtually everything.

My colleagues have raised the concern that farmers in this province already have about the viability of the agriculture industry in this province. I don't believe the farmers are making enough margin of profit on their farming operations to be able to sustain the cost of this government wanting to make a public statement about food safety while they download the costs of maintaining that food safety on to the farmers of this province.

As we spend a week when we're talking a lot about security, I think we should start to expand our notion of security to recognize that one of the most important aspects of domestic security is the independence of our food supply. If you think that's a big stretch, in the last minute that we have for this debate this evening I ask you to think about it. If this bill opens up the ability of the minister to set huge new fees on farmers in order to do what this government has refused to do with a financial commitment on its own part in the past, if those fees become prohibitive for the small farmers of this province to keep farming, if the result of that is that we get big, foreign multinationals coming in and taking over our farming operations, what does that do, first of all, to food safety and, secondly, to our economic independence when it comes to food sufficiency?

I submit to you that that is fundamentally important, not only to the economy of this province and to the \$28-billion agriculture industry, but it is also fundamentally important to the security of this province.

I recognize that it's now 9:30 and I will yield the floor to the adjournment of the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Your remarks can be picked up at the next opportunity. It is 9:30 of the clock. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 2130.*

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