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Tuesday 17 April 2007

Mardi 17 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 avril 2007

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES ESPÈCES EN VOIE
DE DISPARITION

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 3, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk and to make related changes to other Acts / Projet de loi 184, Loi visant à protéger les espèces en péril et à apporter des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Applause.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I hope everyone's still clapping when I finish. I realize I have about 20 minutes.

This is a bill—I started to do some research today. Although I had the opportunity, sitting in the Speaker's chair, to listen to some of the debate earlier, I had not really turned my head to what I was going to say, but we had a wonderful opportunity in the last hour, those who availed themselves of the Environmental Defence Fund, which was—

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): What were you?

Mr. Prue: I'm going to get to that—which was downstairs. They had a wonderful reception where they invited members of this House to come down and try to adopt or be one of the animals, the birds, the trees, the flowers, the reptiles that were in need of protection in this province. In fact, they had 103 such species that they find at risk. They had a card to go with each and every member of this Legislature. They would only give five cards, but through my adept trading and cajoling I was able to get a number of cards to describe the various members of this Legislature, and I think it behooves me to talk about not only the environmental defence of the animals and the species that are at risk in Ontario but also some of the members who are described and associated with them. I want to take my hat off to Environmental Defence and everything that they try to do. It was one of the most novel receptions that I, as a member of this Legislature, have ever had the opportunity to attend.

Some of the cards that I was able to collect—and I put the Liberals first, the Tories second and the New Democrats towards the end, but—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: No. They seem to have captured the personality of some of the people around here. I don't know who did the research, but I commend them.

The member from Brampton West–Mississauga is the environmental defence for the Shumard oak. I thought, "This is a kind of a silent guy who stands there tall and sometimes alone." There it is, and he's a Shumard oak.

The next one was the member from Mississauga West, who is a golden seal. We often, in this Legislature, accuse members of the backbench of being trained seals, but he is in fact a golden seal—

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): A trained golden seal.

Mr. Prue: He is a trained golden seal. He seems to have been captured quite well.

There is my colleague in the adjacent riding of Scarborough Southwest, who has been equated with an eastern rat snake. I don't know whether that's particularly fair, but that's what they chose for him.

We have the member from York West, who was determined by them to be a hooded warbler. I think that's probably true, because he does stand up and chirp from time to time.

There is, of course, the member from Essex, whom I am so proud to see here tonight. He is a blue racer. I think this comes from his wonderful bow ties that he wears. He has certainly distinguished himself in this House and is equated with a blue racer, which seems to be a very large snake found in southern Ontario and Pelee Island. Of course they did the research, because that's where he is from.

1850

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Mike Colle: the woodland vole—

Mr. Yakabuski: Colle the vole.

Mr. Prue: Colle the vole. And this has a habitat across southern Ontario. I don't ever remember seeing too many voles, but I do know that Mr. Hudak—the member for Erie–Lincoln—told me that he has a lot of those around his property.

We have Mr. Duguid, who is a blueheart. I always thought he was more of a redheart, but they have him equated as a blueheart.

We have the member for Ottawa–Orléans, who is an eastern ribbon snake. That's from Georgian Bay to eastern Ontario—of course, that's where he's from.

Now we go into the Conservatives. We have the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock—

Mr. Yakabuski: She's a snake.

Mr. Prue: Yes, yes. She is an eastern hog-nosed snake, from southern Ontario to Lake Nipissing, which of course takes in the riding of which she is the member.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Well, no. I think that the picture here of the eastern hog-nosed snake does absolutely nothing for the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, who doesn't look anything like that at all.

We have the brand new member from Burlington, Joyce Savoline, who is a hoary mountain mint.

Mr. Yakabuski: A what?

Mr. Prue: A hoary mountain mint, which is in southern Ontario—

Mr. Yakabuski: I guess she smells good.

Mr. Prue: She smells good.

We have the Leader of the Opposition, who is an eastern wolf. This is around the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence region. He is suffering from threats of habitat loss, hunting and trapping—no doubt brought about by his many travels in Ontario.

We have my colleague and my friend here from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, who is a Kirtland's warbler in southern Ontario, which is suffering from habitat loss and parasites. Perhaps that is his close proximity to me; I don't know.

Now we get into some of the others. We have the member from Lanark–Carleton, who is a five-lined skink from southern Ontario, who is suffering, of course, from habitat degradation and poaching because people are actually out trying to grab him.

We have the member from Nepean–Carleton, who ought to be the most honoured of the lot, because she is referred to as the grey fox.

I only got two New Democrat cards. I got the card for the member for Toronto–Danforth, who is said to be a bird's foot violet, which is found across southern Ontario. Habitat loss and trampling—because people are trampling all over him. I don't know whether he appreciates that, but that's what was said.

Last but not least, I actually got a card of myself.

Mr. Yakabuski: No.

Mr. Prue: I did, indeed. It is Michael Prue, from Beaches–East York, the least bittern. This is habitat loss, degradation and pollution from which he suffers. That's what a least bittern looks like.

I really want to commend the members of Environmental Defence, because they brought home, to the 103 members of the Legislature who were able to go there, 103 animals, birds, trees, flowers, rodents, reptiles and amphibians that are under considerable risk. In fact, we know that there are many, many animals, birds and wildlife that are under considerable risk in this province. We know, from the record, that 40% of all of those species that are at risk in Canada are at risk in the province of Ontario. We know that over the last 20 or 25

years, literally thousands of species across this planet have become extinct.

There was a television ad that we all saw a few years ago: "Extinct means forever." It means that when an animal, species or bird becomes extinct, they are no more. It is a huge loss to our planet, it is a huge loss to humanity, it is a huge loss to everything in this interconnected world we have when a species no longer exists. The rate of extinction is growing faster and faster with human development, with global warming, with urbanization, with pollution and with all of the other things that come with that.

We have had some success stories where governments have gone in and tried to do appropriate protections. Some that come immediately to mind are whooping cranes, which 50 years ago were on the verge of extinction, with only eight left. We're all the way up to 120 or 130 of them, although this year was particularly calamitous when the whole new flock that was born, save one, died in a freak thunderstorm in Florida. It was pretty sad when that happened. But it is about 120 or more birds today, and that is a success story.

There is, of course, the success story of the pandas in China and the peregrine falcons here in Ontario. I remember looking up in absolute awe last year when a pair of peregrine falcons was nesting on the front of the legislative building. I don't know how many people had an opportunity to go out and see that nesting—

Hon. Mr. Peters: They're back.

Mr. Prue: Are they back? I haven't seen them.

Hon. Mr. Peters: They're hawks; they're red-tailed hawks.

Mr. Prue: No, I'm sure there were peregrines last year. Anyway, to see the kind of thing where a species is at risk and it comes back to an urban environment right here on the legislative lawn and right here on the building was absolutely amazing and wonderful.

We see, and this is a paradoxical thing, a species that 10 years ago was hugely at risk and today is hunted, I think sometimes possibly to the point of extirpation, and that is the cormorants that exist around Lake Ontario and around the Great Lakes. There are people, including members of this Legislature, who are out to extirpate them. It was only 15 or 20 years ago when they were almost extinct. They are a native species. I remember as a boy seeing them for the first time, seeing them fly over the waters. They fly very low to the waters in a V formation, sometimes only a few centimetres off the actual waves. They are amazing birds to watch. But there are people who think that these magnificent animals should be extirpated. In fact, in Ontario that is what is happening. There is a bill before this Legislature to cull them. There is a bill before this Legislature to kill them because they aren't the prettiest bird in the world and their guano and what they do on the islands does cause some degradation to the islands. But I would say that if we are to protect the species, if we are to look to the natural environment, we need to look to protect those birds which were once endangered and not extirpate

them, as this bill so readily warns us of doing. We have others, but I'm mindful of the time because I spent far too long talking about the good cards.

The reasons that the animal species and other species are being extirpated in Ontario are very many and complex. It's the degradation of the land, it's the pollution, it's the urbanization, it's the highways and it's the global warming. There are a thousand things that can cause this, and the reality is that it's human beings who are causing it. It's human beings in our many numbers, whether we intend to do it or not, who are causing this, and by pesticides and farming as well. Many animals that once flourished are no longer here.

I am happy, I will say for the record, to support any bill, including this one, which will stop extinctions. I am happy to support any bill, including this one, which will help us to restore the habitat and help us to restore the many animal and plant species that exist on this planet, and particularly in Ontario. I am happy to try to keep forever the many species of wildlife and the heritage that we enjoy here in Ontario and that we need to preserve for all Canadians and, indeed, all mankind.

In supporting this bill, and I will be voting for it at second reading, I am doing so in the full knowledge and expectation that the government will order committee hearings so that people can come forward and try to make a good bill better. We're not saying that it's not a good bill, because it is a good bill; we are saying that this good bill can be a better bill, and there are only a couple of things that need to be done. The first and foremost is that we need to consult with the First Canadians in this province. We need to go north of the 51st parallel to those aboriginal communities that occupy most of the land that is outside of the urban area, and we need to discuss with them the contents of this bill.

1900

I heard on this weekend, Friday or Saturday, that the Minister of Natural Resources will be flying to Thunder Bay and will be meeting with some of the groups of aboriginal Canadians to talk about this bill and what it means. It's better late than never. Quite frankly, we had an obligation, and we indeed have an obligation at all times, to consult with the First Nations of Ontario, and in Ontario we have a far greater obligation than just what is right and moral. In Ontario, we are the signatories to a treaty that was signed 101 years ago with the aboriginal communities north of the 51st parallel, Treaty 3, but especially Treaty 9, which Ontario as well as the federal government signed to ensure that the aboriginal communities would be protected in their way of life and in their environment. We have not lived up to that treaty. We have not consulted when we should have consulted. We have not gone in there and seen what they can do to help us make this legislation work.

So it is better late than never that the minister is going to meet with them, but quite frankly, this bill cannot succeed in the great land mass of Ontario unless the people who live there, i.e., the aboriginal communities, are onside. We have an obligation to consult with them

and to do what is right so that they too can be stewards of the land and can protect our flora and fauna.

We have an obligation to look to our farmers. We have an obligation to do what is right by them. I can only quote, being a guy from the city, what some of the newspapers have to say about this very deal, because it does not appear to me that the farmers in northern Ontario have been serviced particularly well by this government in terms of what—I need to find the quotes; oh, here they are—this government has or has not done. I have two quotes, one from the Sudbury Star and the other from the Thunder Bay Chronicle, which I want to read into the record because I think these two newspapers have said what needs to be done and what has not been done to date.

I quote first from the Sudbury Star of Monday, March 26, 2007, where they wrote, "While the legislation is necessary, it still could fall short in one area.

"Landowner stewardship has been recognized in the legislation with conservation easements and tax incentives, but there is no mention of compensation.

"Farmers and landowners stand to lose revenue if an endangered species is found on their land. Preserving the species' habitat could likely mean a loss of crops or other products as well as grazing land ... the government still has time to consult with agriculture and landowner groups.

"That is the only way to ensure the species at risk legislation will become a law that produces results in a way that is fair and equitable to those on whose lands the animals might be found." These are very telling, careful and good words from the Sudbury Star, Monday, March 26, 2007.

The second statement, which comes from the Thunder Bay Chronicle, echoes the problems of northern Ontario and those northerners who live outside of most of the urban areas of our province. It says, and I quote the editorial in part, "Legislation that is aimed at protecting vulnerable animals and plant species across the province, could unduly restrict logging and mining activities and further jeopardize communities in crisis in the north" and "the act could lead to immediate and indefinite moratoriums on any resource-based activity, and could add more red tape for a forest industry already in crisis." They go on later in the editorial to say, "Besides more consultation to do so, we propose that the new act include provisions for crown land exchanges when issues of protection arise. If protection of an endangered species results in a ban on logging or mining in an area, then the province must release an equal amount of wilderness to replace the area protected."

People who earn their livelihoods on the land need to be protected, whether those are aboriginal communities, whether they are people involved in the mining and forest industry, whether they are farmers. I am asking the government to listen very carefully to any of the constructive criticisms that might be made. We all have an obligation to protect those species. We all have an obligation to make sure that they do not go extinct. We have an obliga-

tion to ourselves and to our children and to generations yet unborn to make sure that the wonderful place that is Ontario continues to be that way. We cannot and we must not let anything stand in our way, save and except the duty we have to consult these people and save and except the committee process that must—in the fulsome debate that flows from it, to listen, to learn and to act.

That would be the time I have. I will be supporting this legislation, but I am very hopeful that this government will do the right thing in terms of committee work and in listening to the people to make a good act even better.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): It's a pleasure to respond to the comments from the member for Beaches–East York. I'm certainly pleased to hear the support of nature in tone and that we have all-party support for this piece of legislation that is moving forward. It's great to see.

We all know that it has been 36 years since this legislation has been updated; 1971 was the last time that it was, and we have only 42 of the 176 endangered species currently protected in the province of Ontario. This is a very important piece of legislation, a very necessary piece of legislation. I hear the members opposite. We are listening. The consultations are going on. I can certainly tell you that tomorrow I will be in Kingston listening to groups present at a round-table meeting. On Monday, there were some sessions in Windsor, and the consultations will continue.

I also want to point out that about a year ago, in May 2006, we consulted widely with key landowners, conservation organizations, aboriginal communities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario through newspaper advertisements, the Environmental Bill of Rights and so on. Aboriginal consultation began on May 10, 2006, when by-mail invitations were sent to First Nation and provincial tribal organizations to participate in the discussion paper.

Those discussions have been going on for some time. There is a lengthy list that I have here of the First Nation organizations that have been contacted and that we've been gathering feedback from. We're going to continue to do that right through the process. But I think we all agree that the legislation needs to be changed; it needs to be updated. We're falling well behind.

The other thing I would point out is that the federal Species at Risk Act, 2004, is part of the national accord. Provinces were required to step up to the plate and deliver on legislation. So we're going to be fulfilling our federal obligations as well.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): Certainly, when the Endangered Species Act was brought in, it was by a Progressive Conservative government back in 1971. What's unique about this particular bill, not only that it's regulation-driven in terms of how this is going to be put together, is that the member from Sault Ste. Marie was talking about consultation. Usually you do the consultation before you bring the bill in. Here we

are in second reading, and what you do is debate in second reading. Then you go to public hearings, which the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has been asking for, public hearings to deal with this across the province in a very instructive way to get meaningful impact, because the member from Beaches–East York, to my left, has been talking about dealing with people whom we should respect in terms of how they're going to be significantly impacted—native Canadians, farmers and the people in the mining industry—in terms of the impact that they have.

1910

I had a meeting a couple of weeks ago with the Simcoe County Christian Farmers Association in Barrie at the Northwest Barrie United Church. They expressed their concerns because they were up on the bill and everything, but the fact is that they hadn't been consulted. They were trying to figure out how this bill was going to work because there is minimal protection in terms of their stewardship program for people who are impacted by the bill. If they are affected by a particular species that's on their property, how is the government going to deal with this? The government hasn't funded this. They haven't thought it through. They're consulting as they go along here because they're embarrassed because they did not consult on this particular bill.

The bill could have been done through a white paper. It could have been done through a consultation process before you draft it, or go out after first reading. Here we are at second reading, and they're still consulting.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It gives me great pleasure to make a few remarks about my friend and colleague from Beaches–East York, who brought an engaging debate into the Legislature tonight. I don't know whether that debate was as a result of his passion for the issue or whether it was the fact that he has been designated by Environmental Defence as the honorary protector of the least bittern. When I think of my friend from Beaches–East York—and I'm sure all members would agree—Environmental Defence was very clever in their alliteration when they gave the member for Beaches–East York the least bittern to be the honorary protector of because he's a very affable member. He's someone everyone gets along with. So to consider him to be a least bittern I think absolutely wonderfully clever, and I congratulate them on that. I also congratulate them on the reception they had tonight, which was a very clever and engaging way of getting members into their reception to talk about this very piece of legislation as well as the frightening number of species, whether they be plant, animal, insect, rodent or reptile—whatever we want to specifically identify, but there are very many of all of those types of species that are endangered in our province. It was a very engaging way to have members participate in the discussion, and very timely, indeed, that the bill is being called for debate tonight.

I want to thank the member for Beaches–East York for his engaging debate, not only in terms of the reception but also acknowledging that there are some concerns

with the bill and indicating that the support is there as long as it's going to be addressing some of the issues that we raised.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): To pick up where my colleague from Hamilton East left off with her remarks on the member for Beaches–East York: If he is indeed the least bittern, I wonder who the most bittern is.

I noted that a fair number of my colleagues were reptiles and snakes and I wondered whether or not they clustered in any party. I must give the Environmental Defence people this: They didn't seem to cluster in any party. However, just for the record, they had me listed as a golden seal, which was very nice. It was nice to know as a goaltender that as a golden seal I was part of the Original Six expansion franchises.

With the Endangered Species Act, 2007, it notes that of the 30,000 species here in Ontario, some 175 are at risk. If one takes these very helpful cards and turns them over, you very quickly get an idea of what it is that causes species to be at risk and where these species are that are at risk—a fair number of them in the Great Lakes regions. Where their habitat is threatened it seems to be deforestation, habitat loss, weather. It shows us that in the type of modern society that we're creating, we have to be very mindful that in our zeal to improve the lot of all Ontarians we don't inadvertently find that we're destroying some of the species that make Ontario unique and make it truly one of the most blessed places on earth.

I truly hope this act passes very quickly and urge all members to support it.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: I would like to thank the members from Sault Ste. Marie, Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, Hamilton East and Mississauga West for their comments.

To the member from Sault Ste. Marie, he has said what the government has said before—and I thank him again for that—that this will be going to committee and that there will be some extensive consultations taking place over the next weeks and months in order to make the bill—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: I'm going to get to you, too—in order to make the bill better. I wish some of the consultations had taken place earlier, particularly those in the NAN community and Treaty 9 in northern Ontario, because it seems to me that every time we attempt to deal with First Nations, every time we attempt to deal with our autochthonous peoples, we do so as an afterthought. We do so after the bill has been put forward rather than doing so in consultation before. But it is better late than never, and I am mindful that the minister will be meeting later this week.

To my colleague the member from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, he has talked about consultation. He is absolutely right: The consultation needs to take place, and it needs to be ongoing. It could have been done earlier, as he suggests, but again, I am thankful that it is being done

nonetheless. Even though it could have been done earlier, it could have been done more often, it still is being done.

My colleague from Hamilton East talked about the wonderful reception. I want to reiterate her words. It was one of the best receptions I have had in my nearly six years here. It was fun. It had us involved. It had us looking at most of those species, quite frankly some of which I had never seen. Although I think of myself as a great fisherman, there were fish on there I had never seen before.

My friend from Mississauga West is absolutely right: Oftentimes the extirpation, the elimination of the species takes place and we are not even mindful that we are doing it in our zeal to have a better province. We need to take a really close look.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): It's of course a privilege, honour and duty to speak on Bill 184, as you will know last actually updated in 1971, so certainly it's about time.

I'll declare at the beginning that I'll be sharing my time with the MPP from Ottawa Centre, the honourable Richard Patten.

As you know, Bill 184 is about innovation, sustained protection and, of course, it's scientifically grounded. I'd like to welcome the support and also the remarks which are always colourful from the member from Beaches–East York.

As a somewhat city-bound individual who may not have the most natural resonance with a lot of the species that are being named, I have to tell you, though, that in a scientific or medical capacity, we have the utmost respect for biological diversity and the number of species that our planet is heir to, because from my perspective, those species not only add to the chain and the circle of life but are often a source of medicine and new drug developments. So with that, I can certainly appreciate this particular bill.

As well, you will appreciate, with the kind of ongoing extinction of a number of these species, this is perhaps actually a marker for the human world as well. I think it's our obligation in the Legislature to hand over to our children, including young Ontarians like Chamsa Qadri and little Shafiq Qadri who I know are watching right now—we, as stewards of the environment, have to hand to them the full complement of what Ontario has to offer.

Some of my colleagues from the opposite side have talked about time frames with regard to this bill being brought forward, but I have to say that they've had eight years combined on the Tory side and five years previous to that, so 13 years' total, and no update, no initiative, no measure, no program was really brought forth in this realm.

Bill 184 is part of the McGuinty vision. For example, the Ministry of Natural Resources budget, up by 6.4%, \$44 million.

1920

Now, let's have a look at what some of our outside stakeholders, interested players, watchers of the environ-

ment actually have to say. For example, Dr. Rick Smith, the executive director of Environmental Defence, writes, "The new Endangered Species Act is a significant step forward for Ontarians and the natural heritage we all value so highly. This new legislation will provide an inclusive, science-based and effective framework within which to balance different environmental and economic priorities."

Bill 184 is part of an overall mandate of environmental stewardship: as I mentioned, the Ministry of Natural Resources budget increase, the Ministry of the Environment budget increase of 12.5%, our greenbelt legislation, the Clean Water Act and so much more.

In particular, Speaker, as you'll appreciate, as was mentioned earlier, something like only 42 of the endangered species of the 175 are on this list, and this is a very important part of our natural heritage which we as stewards of the province—flora, fauna and the rest—really are entrusted with taking care of over the years.

This particular bill is about innovation, sustained protection and I think is a win for not only Ontarians and for the environment but for all parties here, and no doubt that's part of the reason why it's warranting all-party support. With that, I'll pass it to the MPP from Ottawa Centre.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Thank you to my colleague from Etobicoke North for his thoughtful comments.

Let me begin by paraphrasing an aboriginal thought, and that is: When we lose a part of the web of life, we move closer to threatening our own survival. Of course, that's not our orientation in life, especially the western orientation in North America, especially the urban orientation. We look at other species—animals—as something to shoot, something to eat, something to stuff once we've shot it or something to enslave as pets. I'm somewhat culturally ashamed to say that, but frankly it's kind of that attitude. If there's something that's an exotic species, endangered, the immediate response of a lot of people is, "Well, I can get some money for this. I can sell this. Someone else will take it on as a pet."

So it seems to me we have somewhat of an historical neurosis related to others in our universe. Perhaps it goes back to the concept of dominion over the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea and animals of the land etc. that this arrogance related to other species and other life forms is the characterization of dominance rather than our feeling that we are part of life, part of the universe, part of the planetary scheme of things and therefore that requires an essential respect of other living forms. I believe our aboriginal brothers and sisters help us with that, because their relationship, as they see it—their spiritual leaders and elders talk about their relationship to the birds of the air and Mother Earth, and they will talk about the wind and they will talk about the phenomena. But the animals are cohorts, coexisting on this particular earth in an inter-related web of survival.

I'm fascinated—just briefly to mention a few examples. There is a movie—I forget the actual name of it, but it has to do with sharks; I haven't seen it, but my daughter was telling me about it—that was talking about how endangered sharks are. Because of that, and their role in the sea as probably one of the dominant predators, that of course changes the whole sequence, the chain reaction, of the other species in the ocean. All of a sudden you have an abundance of those fish and crustaceans that are eating what's on the bottom of the ocean. It's created an imbalance, and whenever we have an imbalance, there's a threat to the environment.

I find it interesting that there was an article—I think it was in today's paper—called, "What's Killing Niagara's Bees?" It's not often that one puts one's head back and contemplates bees, unless you're a parent and you want to talk about the birds and the bees with your offspring because it's a timely thing to do so. But other than that, one is not too inclined, generally, to do that. But I thought, "Wow, what a powerful statement." The article is from the Toronto Star. It goes on to talk about the threat: "—up to 90% in some ... colonies—has prompted Ontario beekeepers to ask" university "experts ... to investigate" this particular move.

I was reading some of the statistics on this: "It takes one colony of honey bees (around 30,000 bees) to pollinate an acre of fruit trees. Pollination success increases if there are more honey bees present at the time of peak flowering.

"The value of bees pollinating fruit, vegetables and legumes is 10 times the value of honey produced (more than \$1 billion in Canada)." That's an economic analysis, but the point is that we forget the role played by various insect species, animals and fowl.

There was another article earlier this week that talked about the reduction of songbirds that are coming home, back north, having wintered in the southern United States or Mexico. What that means: It's not just the vacant sound of a bird. They all play a role: in the nature of the insects, in the eating of mosquitoes and of certain insects that affect trees. Without those birds playing that particular function and being interrelated, those trees now become susceptible, so an imbalance occurs.

I thought today that the Environmental Defence organization, which had an opportunity to welcome some MPPs this afternoon, was quite creative in what they said, as you heard from some of the members. They identified some species that were at risk and even put some members' names related to some of them, that they theoretically would be fostering the protection of these endangered species. I thought that was very creative. They're asking that all parties consider this.

This will be going to committee. This is one of the bills, in my opinion, that one day—I hope when we reform the Legislature. I will be the first to applaud when we reform this place. We will have the best thoughts taken to ameliorate what's here. My understanding is that we've got at least two parties, if not the better part of three, that support this because it relates, in a selfish

sense, back to us. When we threaten other species, we actually threaten life as we know it. We threaten the balance of life, and we threaten ourselves as well.

I leave my colleagues with the particular thought that this is a pretty serious piece of legislation. It's more than just the others that are out there, meaning the birds and animals of the forest and the air. It has something to do with an essential, spiritual respect of life.

I will sit down, on that particular note, and ask some of my colleagues to consider that in the best sense of the term.

1930

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I'm pleased to comment on the speeches from the members for Etobicoke North and Ottawa Centre, and also the previous speech from the member for Beaches–East York, on Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act. Both the member for Ottawa Centre and the member for Beaches–East York talked about our aboriginal communities. What we in the PC Party are pushing for is for people like the aboriginal communities to be heard on this bill. So we are pushing in the strongest way we can for there to be public committee hearings that travel around the province, if possible. I, as the critic, have made myself available to participate. Whether it be constituency week or Fridays or whenever, it can be arranged. That's what we're asking for, and every day I keep receiving letters and e-mails from groups asking for that; they want it. They support the bill, but they want to see public hearings.

Just recently, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture:

“Dear Mr. Miller:

“The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, representing the interests of over 38,000 farm family members and businesses across Ontario wholeheartedly supports the protection and recovery of species at risk. However, we do have serious concerns with a number of provisions within the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007.

“We have also heard from a broad spectrum of organizations that they have not had sufficient opportunity to voice their perspectives on and concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007.

“The OFA believes the act will have deleterious effects on our farm families who earn their livelihoods from their property. Although sound farming practices may be significantly disrupted through restrictions on property usage, the act does not provide a commitment to compensate farmers for such restrictions.”

I don't have time to read the whole letter; perhaps, if I get another opportunity, I will. But that's from Geri Kamenz, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. That's just one of many groups that I've heard from. Most support the act but they're all asking for the same thing, and that's full committee hearings with public consultations across the province so they can have their concerns heard.

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure as well to make a few remarks on the speeches by the member for Etobicoke North and the member for Ottawa Centre. I want to say that I really appreciate particularly the remarks from the member for Ottawa Centre. I think he has made some quite insightful comments about the importance of legislation to protect our endangered species. I agree wholeheartedly with many of the remarks he made, particularly as he illustrated the tie-in between the various types of species that are under threat. Even in our own newspapers today—and I believe he spoke about Niagara bees particularly, as well as songbirds that are supposed to be coming back and apparently are not coming back in the numbers expected. So there is a very real illustration of the kinds of situations that we face even right now in terms of the changing way that our environment is adapting to or reacting to the environmental footprint of the human species and the way that it is crowding out all other species.

I too agree with him that the gathering downstairs was a very positive and lighthearted one, but the issues are extremely serious. I would hope, though, that the government will heed the illustration that the member for Ottawa Centre from their caucus gave in regard to First Nations in indicating how we can learn from First Nations in terms of their relationship to the natural world, and I have to say that this government needs to heed First Nations in its attempt to put together legislation on endangered species. If they don't, it could be to the peril of First Nations, and that certainly would not be something that anyone in this House would support.

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'm pleased to stand this evening to make a few comments with regard to the comments of my colleagues, and the word that came out that I want to address is “coexistence.” That's the whole idea behind an act that will address our endangered species. We all know, of course, that whatever the species might be, right on up the chain from the very smallest to mankind itself, once gone, it's gone. We have to work together to protect these endangered species.

The cards that we received this evening at the reception for the environmental defence—I think in many cases it's not a coincidence. Mine happens to be the blue racer snake. On Pelee Island—that's in the middle of Lake Erie and in my riding—the blue racer snake is a significant endangered species. What we have had to wrestle with over the years is the co-existence with development. I think it can be done, and we're close to that. The folks on Pelee Island want this piece of legislation passed because it does allow for us to manage habitat and retain those endangered species at the same time as we manage development.

So I'm most anxious, along with my constituents on the island, to have this act passed. I agree that we should get as much input from those who have had experience over the years with these species and those who have positive comments to make on the legislation through committee work.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to some of the

comments that have been made by the members for Etobicoke North and Ottawa Centre and indeed all of the speakers who have made comments on the Endangered Species Act this evening. I think all of the comments that have been made have been very thoughtful, reasonable comments that reflect the importance that preserving endangered species has to all of us. I think we all recognize the importance that we place on this particular subject so that we can protect these species for our planet generally and for generations to come.

The only caveat I would offer here is that we need to ensure that we hear from all of the voices that will be affected by this legislation, particularly the First Nations people, as has been noted, who have a particularly close affinity with the land, and our farmers, who also have a close affinity with the land and who will be directly impacted by the terms and conditions of this legislation. So I would only urge the Minister of Natural Resources and the government to ensure that we have proper consultations with all of those parties who will be directly impacted by this legislation to ensure that the legislation at the end of the day is properly balanced and will achieve the objectives for which it was intended. If you only embark upon a review of a piece of legislation of this nature every 30 years—and it has been since 1971 when the act was first introduced—I think everyone concerned on both sides of this House wants to make sure that what we end up with is something that's going to serve the best interests of society, of nature and of all concerned.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Patten: I'd like to thank the members for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Hamilton East, Essex and Whitby–Ajax for their comments. I have a few comments in reaction to some of those.

I appreciate the ardent fervour of the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka asking for full consultation etc. I'm not sure whether, in the length of time we have, that will necessarily happen throughout the province, but there will be an opportunity here. There are other consultations that will take place, as has already been identified, and there are some consultations that have already taken place that make part of the mix. So I would hope that for those who felt they were cut out, there would be an opportunity one way or another, whether it's actually coming here to Toronto or through some kind of teleconferencing, for those voices, through letters, through depositions or position papers, to do that. So I say that to my friend from Parry Sound.

To my friend from Hamilton East, I acknowledge her identity with the concerns we have for the species around us and how they have an impact. I certainly accept her suggestion that we listen very carefully to First Nations or aboriginal people, who, on this particular issue, I think, have a lot to say and have a lot to teach us.

To my friend from Essex, who talks about coexistence on Pelee Island and the challenges on Pelee Island of various things—he didn't mention the cormorants, but I

know that's another challenge there in how you balance things.

My friend from Whitby–Ajax, in terms of taking the long term, listening to farmers, listening to First Nations people: I hope we all have the propensity and openness to do that.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join the debate tonight on Bill 184, An Act to protect species at risk and to make related changes to other Acts. In keeping with what my friend from Beaches–East York, better known as the least bittern, began earlier—where are my glasses? That is not going to work very well. Anyway, we'll have to try and wing it without them. He was talking about the Environmental Defence group that was here tonight. I had a chance to speak to Rick Smith, the executive director—I think Bob Delaney took them—about the reception.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Thank you very much.

It was a fine reception. It was very interesting with regard to the attaching of a species at risk to each member of the Legislature—and the least bittern to my friend from East York. I just wanted to run over a couple more. The finance minister is the honorary guardian of the Jefferson salamander. The member for Perth–Middlesex is the honorary guardian of the queen snake. The member for Oakville is the honorary guardian of the silver shiner. The Minister of Community and Social Services is the honorary guardian of the red-headed woodpecker. She's somewhat red-headed; it's maybe a little bit more blondish. The Minister of Culture is the honorary guardian of the dense blazing star. It's a plant.

Hon. Mr. Peters: How did you get so many cards?

Mr. Yakabuski: I traded.

Interjections.

Mr. Yakabuski: Yeah. We won't get into how he got them.

The Speaker for this evening, the member for Waterloo–Wellington, is the honorary guardian of the wavy-rayed lampmussel. Myself I'll leave for last.

The member for Trinity–Spadina is the honorary guardian of the cerulean warbler, and he does sing a pretty good song in here from time to time. There's no question about that.

Ms. Horwath: Are you jealous?

Mr. Yakabuski: Yes, I am at times.

Myself—as the Minister of Natural Resources said when he looked at this, “Oh, you're a diseased tree”—I am the honorary guardian of the butternut.

Hon. Mr. Peters: Beautiful tree for furniture.

Mr. Yakabuski: Yes. But an interesting exercise nonetheless, and I think it is important to draw attention to species at risk. When you look at the big picture, who is going to be against protecting species at risk here in Ontario or any other jurisdiction? It just would make no sense whatsoever, because none of us, nobody, wants to see any species that the good Lord has put on this earth leave this earth when we have some way of ensuring that

that doesn't happen. I do know that, through history, many, many species have become extinct that have had nothing to do with anything that man has done, but we certainly play a big role in it today.

So when you look at the big picture, the goal is laudable. What is missing here on the part of the government is not the goal but the implementation, the exercise, if you want to call it that. This bill probably should have been brought to this Legislature a year, a year and a half, two years ago. In that case, the government wouldn't be in such a hurry now to rush it through prior to the end of this session, because as we know, when this session is over, this House is proroguing, and any bills that are on the order paper are going to die if they're not passed into law.

Now, of course, the government has a need to move post haste to try to get this legislation passed and approved. However, if they had moved more quickly in their mandate—let's not mince words here; they've been in power for almost four years. They had ample time to bring this piece of legislation forward. If they had moved more post haste at the beginning of their term, we wouldn't be in a situation today where we've got all kinds of groups who are very concerned that the government has failed with regard to proper consultation on this bill and proper opportunities for those who are affected, perhaps negatively, by the implementation of this bill, to bring their concerns to the government to be discussed and considered with regard to possible amendments and/or implementation of this bill.

Earlier today, I presented a petition in the House. The petition is with regard to the lack of consultation. You have to recall that this government promised—there is that word again—promised to hold consultation wherever legislation could have a significant impact on the public. This does have significant impact. And what are we getting for consultation? Well, we're hearing that the minister and some staff are going around travelling, and they're going to have some interviews, and they're going to have some chats. These are hand-picked people that they're going to chat with, by invitation only. That's who they're going to see. They're not opening this up to the public. That is no substitution for proper legislative committee hearings. Legislative committee hearings are what the people have come to expect on a piece of legislation, and they should expect no less on this legislation.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): We're going to be out there consulting with the people.

Mr. Yakabuski: The member for Peterborough says, "We're going to be out there consulting with the people." Where might that be? And where might those committee hearings be held? It's not by when the minister decides, "I'm going to go out and have a few conversations over a cup of coffee with people that I may already know."

Why are we not having public hearings? Take the issue to the people. Don't force them to come to see you. Take the issue to the people with an all-party committee of this Legislature. That should be what we're doing with consultation; not minister's staff or whomever going out

and chatting with these people and coming back and saying, "We've had consultations."

You see, I had this petition dropped off to my house last Saturday by a group of people who are very concerned about the lack of consultation. Renfrew county council, the representatives of all the municipalities in the county of Renfrew, have expressed serious concerns about the lack of consultation on this bill. They've also expressed serious concerns, as others have, about the lack of compensation. If you truly believe that a piece of legislation, any bill, whatever you may make of it, is in the best interests of our society, of our province, everybody in the province, then I think you also have a responsibility to attach to it, for those people who will be negatively affected by the bill—the possibility exists with the farming community, the forest industry, other industry, private landowners, all kinds of people who could be negatively impacted by this—some form of compensation for loss of use or loss of revenue. There is nothing here.

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Again, they've rushed this bill out, because we're near the end of a session. This is another one of these rural-urban wedge issues that this government has become so adept at, because this is not going to be a contentious bill in downtown Toronto—in fact, it's going to be very well supported by people who come from Toronto or other large urban centres—but the lack of consultation and the lack of compensation does mean it's going to be a contentious bill in rural Ontario, because those people feel that their concerns have not been addressed.

If this bill is exactly what we need—and I concede that it is an improvement over what we have, and I think it is high time. I do, in some way, congratulate the government for dealing with this, but they're way behind; they should have done it a couple of years ago so that it could have been properly discussed throughout the province. I do agree that legislation has to be updated from time to time, and this act is no exception. In many ways, it is an improvement over the current situation. But having said that, in your haste to have this as a campaign piece of wedge material, you've not given it enough time to allow the people to properly make input on it.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario—representing every municipality in the province of Ontario—with the exception of Toronto, which has pulled out of AMO—has grave concerns about the bill for those very reasons.

So I say to the government that if you're pleased with this bill and you believe it addresses all the concerns and covers all of those bases, then why won't we take it to the people? Why are you afraid to take it to the people? It's almost like today, when the Premier is afraid to go before a legislative committee, the estimates committee, to table information and expenses incurred through his office. Why would anybody who has nothing to hide be afraid to come before any committee of this Legislature? That's what I say to the government: If you're comfortable with this bill and you feel you've got it just about right—and I

recognize you have conceded that you are willing to make amendments where that is necessary and we appreciate that—if you feel good about the bill in general, why are we not willing to take this bill to the people?

This is a vast province: 458,000 square miles. I have not converted it to kilometres. But 458,000 square miles is the size of this province. You can't hope to get true input on a bill of this nature, which clearly affects rural people more than it affects urban people, because we're talking about wildlife and we're talking about wild plants and flowers. I think it's a fair assessment that it affects rural people far more. You can't get to the rural parts of this province by having a telephone conversation or the minister and his parliamentary assistant shuffling off to Kingston to meet with some hand-picked people who, quite frankly, are probably going to be quite supportive of the bill. I accept and appreciate that.

But if you really want to have true consultation in a province the size of Ontario, you've got to get out there to where the people are. You've got to get out to northern Ontario and eastern Ontario: Renfrew county and Lanark and Hastings and Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and down in the Bruce and areas like that. You've got to get out to the people. You've got to get up to Nipissing and Sudbury and Timiskaming and all of those places. You've got to get to the people who are most affected by this kind of legislation in their home quarters so they can bring their concerns, not to the minister and not to the parliamentary assistant—

Mr. Leal: He's a good guy.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm not saying he's not. What I'm saying is that they need to be able to bring those to an all-party committee of the Legislature so that members of all parties can also ask questions—I need that; well, maybe I don't; I need the glasses—to determine how this bill affects them negatively and what can be done to improve it.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka took those glasses again. Maybe he wants me not to read the stuff I have.

Mr. Delaney: No, I didn't take your glasses.

Mr. Yakabuski: I wasn't accusing the member from Mississauga West; I was only suggesting that he may have absconded with them temporarily. It could be a trick.

Where was I? So that those people have a chance to bring those concerns, not just to a Liberal member or a Liberal minister but to an all-party committee of the Legislature, so they can speak freely.

I did want to read a couple of things for the record.

Mr. Miller: Here you go.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm just going to borrow these. This is one fancy-looking pair of glasses—pretty tiny.

“Ontario mayors, business call for endangered species consultation.

“Mayors from across Ontario are joining the growing number of political, business, industry and non-government associations calling for the Ontario government to take a sober, second look at Bill 184. The bill is being championed by environmental special interest groups but

viewed with growing concern by the people who work with the land”—work with the land—“say members of the Ontario Forestry Coalition that represent municipal, forestry, business, labour and First Nations interests.” I think that's the key phrase there.

I'm not going to read the whole letter but, “Mayor of Greenstone and president of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Michael Power, says, ‘Now that we've finally had a chance to look at the bill, not just a framework posted on a government website, we now know that, as written, it has the potential to drastically affect our businesses and our communities.... So far, it appears the government isn't going to allow the people of Ontario to have a say,’ he adds.”

Well, I've got to believe that this government wants the people of Ontario to have a say. In a democratic society, I don't think we'd ever want to shove any kind of legislation through without ensuring that the people who are most affected by it have a say; not just the people who accept that the protection of species is a laudable goal, as most people do, but the people in the urban areas would not recognize the need to consult with people who work with the land, as I say again. But this government knows that. This government knows that those people who work with the land have to have a proper opportunity to be consulted.

Again, let us not lose sight of the importance—you put up \$18 million, I believe. Is it \$18 million?

Mr. Miller: Over four years.

Mr. Yakabuski: Over four years, \$18 million. That's \$4.5 million a year in a province that's 458,000 square miles large. That is simply not enough. If you're going to say to these people, “If we take an action as a government because we believe it is imperative for the protection of species, and if part of the reaction is that it has a negative affect on you, someone who works the land and draws a living from that land, then we're going to compensate you, we're going to support you,” that kind of stewardship fund is a drop in the bucket, as they say. That's just not going to cut it.

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I think that that's what these people need to hear from this government, a government that has increased spending by \$22 billion a year since taking office, and now is going to spread across a province 458,000 square miles large a thin, little veneer of \$18 million to cover all of the effects that this legislation could have. That's not enough. That's not enough for these people to be able to sit back and say, “Okay, we recognize and we need and we believe and we accept and we share the feelings that species have to be protected.” But those who lose their livelihoods as a result of legislation have to be protected too, and an \$18-million veneer just won't do it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to make a few remarks on the speech by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I have to say that a number of the comments he raised I would agree with, particularly when he described how important it is to have bona fide

consultation. Again, I understand there are members on the government side who are saying, "Well, we have this member going to talk to this group and that member going to talk to that group." That's really not appropriate in terms of the context of our trying to have a kind of democratic process around the moving along of this bill and its consultation requirements.

I'm a little bit disturbed to think that members of the government side would think that that is good enough. In fact, the process that is undertaken in the committee and in the context of committee work, whereby all members have an opportunity to hear from various stakeholders on pieces of legislation, is the very least that a bill of this import should be subject to. I have to say that it's those very discussions and those very comments that come to light during those public committee hearings that really do lead to significant insights and oftentimes significant amendments that the government is willing to accept, particularly when there is vigorous discourse at the committee level around those potential amendments and what might happen should those amendments not be put into place.

So I don't think committee hearings are necessarily anything to fear. But I certainly do agree with the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who puts on the record the fact that consultation appropriately is through the public hearings process and that's where it needs to happen. I know my own leader has been concerned about that issue, as have other members of my caucus, and I look forward to making a few remarks on it myself very shortly.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I'm delighted to take a couple of minutes to make some comments on the comments that the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke made. Let me first assure the member, who focused a lot of his time on the lack of a consultation process on this bill, that to the best of my understanding—and I know some people who were able to take part—they've been consulting for a year. No, they were not public committee hearings, but the fact is, they've been out talking to people. I know that some people from my riding attended as part of this process to come up with legislation.

The other thing that I must tell the member—he keeps saying, "We need some public hearings." I think the parliamentary assistant, the minister and other members from this side of the House made it very, very clear that we are going to have those public hearings. So let's talk about the legislation; let's not talk about—

Mr. Yakabuski: Here.

Mr. Rinaldi: The member says they're here. Yes, they might be here, and that's not established yet. But even if they're here, I think that's 100% better than what they did. They had nothing. There was no consultation. They were specialists in omnibus bills. So it's hard to understand that it's never enough consultation as far as they're concerned. But I find it very hard to understand how they can say that when they didn't know what the meaning of "consultation and public hearings" was.

Having said that, we have consulted, we are consulting with stakeholders as we have this debate in the House, which is fresh in people's minds, and then we are going to have hearings. The fact that we're going to protect endangered species is not a novel idea, but it hasn't been done since 1971, I believe. So this government has taken it upon itself to renew and refresh the legislation to bring it up to date.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I just want to follow up on the one message the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke pointed out: that the need for hearings and citizen participation is so important with legislation like this. I haven't met anybody who has attended hearings anywhere. I'm calling not only for consultation but also for information sessions. We think of the kind of displays the Ministry of Natural Resources can set up to let people see photographs of the prothonotary warbler, the puff adder and other species that have been identified.

This issue of consultation is very important in rural Ontario, very important for farmers and landowners. I just received a letter from Geri Kamenz, president of the OFA, dated April 12: "The OFA believes the act will have deleterious effects on our farm families who earn their livelihoods from their property. Although sound farming practices may be significantly disrupted through restrictions on property usage, the act does not provide a commitment to compensate farmers for those restrictions. The act also provides broad entry powers which potentially threaten biosecurity controls."

I own a farm. I've grown up on a farm. Nobody has any business walking around on someone's farm, walking behind someone's buildings. In fact, if you're down in the Caledonia area, any staff person or bureaucrat who decides to do that these days is actually taking their life in their hands, given the very touchy situation in that part of Ontario.

For these reasons, the OFA requests standing committee hearings. They want these scheduled. They want to enable closer public scrutiny of the act, to ensure that its potential impacts are known. They also want to provide amendments that may well be necessary. Let's open it up.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I just want to point out to the members of the assembly that I, like others, attended the reception today that was given in regard to a particular group that was here. They gave me a card, and I'm a polar bear. I thought that's pretty fitting, considering I'm kind of a—

Ms. Horwath: You're the honorary guardian of polar bears.

Mr. Bisson: I'm the honorary guardian of polar bears, as my colleague says, being the member for Timmins–James Bay. There are only two members in this assembly who can boast of having polar bears in their ridings, and that's me and Mr. Howard Hampton, the member for Kenora–Rainy River. I've got to say that polar bears are a majestic animal, and I think it's quite fitting that I became a polar bear. Other than being that warm, cuddly

little bear that I got last year from Christina Blizzard, I'm now the white bear.

In regard to the legislation, I just want to say that we, as New Democrats, support the intent of this legislation. My only concern is that I wish the government would take a bit of time in committee to try to get this thing right.

I've had an opportunity to talk to a number of people since the legislation was tabled. A lot of people have looked at it from both sides: those who support it and those who support it but also have some concerns. One of the things that has started to come out in discussions I've had with different individuals is that there's a real fear that the way this legislation is written, we may end up in litigation in regard to a number of aspects. Some examples have been given to me that I thought were somewhat distressing. I don't know if they will actually end up going there at the end of the day, as far as the intent, but I think what's important is that the process we follow in this assembly should always be one that tries to draft legislation that at the end of the day does what it's supposed to do without having adverse consequences. All I can say is that nobody in this House—nobody—doesn't support the intent of being able to protect endangered species. All of us believe we need to do that, because we understand that this is about the heritage of our children and grandchildren. But we also owe it to each other to make sure we do it right. I would hope that we can get to committee to try to fix some parts of this bill that I think need a little bit of fixing.

The Acting Speaker: I return to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Yakubuski: I appreciate the comments of the members from Hamilton East, Northumberland, Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant and Timmins–James Bay.

I just want to reiterate what I said and respond to the comments primarily by the member from Northumberland, who talked about their consultation process. Going out and having these little meetings somewhere behind closed doors does not constitute public consultation. A committee of the Legislature—those records are public. Anyone can see what those people had to say. The conversations and submissions are public. Is the minister going to be tabling the accounts of these meetings, these consultations, with this Legislature? Not likely.

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I think it is very important too that people out in television land know the distinction. These are not little private tête-à-têtes. Committee hearings are public. They are recorded in Hansard. Everything that everybody says is part of the official record, and if you want to have proper public consultations, that is what constitutes it. It's not the minister going on a little junket through the province so he can come back and say, "I've done my due diligence." That is not enough. That's why these stakeholders are concerned. They want to know what's being said, they want to know who's saying it, they want to know where it's being said and they want it to be said

throughout this province. It's not about bringing people to Toronto. It's about taking this bill to the people.

And don't forget compensation—the member for Northumberland never touched the issue. Eighteen million dollars spread across this province is a pretty thin coat of wax, and that is not enough to ensure that the people who lose as a result of this implementation are fairly compensated.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Horwath: I would be remiss if I didn't take a few moments at the beginning to share with members who I got in my cards today from Environmental Defence. I have a number of members in my little selection. By the way, if any members want to do some trading, I'm certainly open to that, although I'm also going to let you know about some of the members I didn't get but whom someone else has allowed me to borrow. I'll go through them.

I have the member for Sudbury and Minister of Northern Development and Mines, who is the honorary guardian of the bashful bulrush. He is responsible for the bashful bulrush. The orangespotted sunfish is the creature that I am the honorary guardian of; the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, of course, is the guardian of the butternut, a tree that he has already mentioned. The Minister of Labour was joking earlier that that particular tree makes great furniture. Interestingly enough, that's probably why it's on one of these cards, because it's being made into too much furniture and no longer exists very well as a tree because we've been using it for furniture.

I also have the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, who is the eastern hog-nosed snake's honorary guardian. I have the minister responsible for democratic renewal, and the plant that she's the honorary guardian of is the deerberry. I have the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, and he is the American badger's guardian. I have the finance minister, and he's the Jefferson salamander's guardian. I have the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and she is the eastern yellow-breasted chat. That's a double. I have doubles, so I do have trading capability, particularly with my doubles.

I have the Attorney General, and he is the guardian for the northern bobwhite. I have the Speaker—not this Speaker, unfortunately, but the Speaker of the House—and he is the guardian of the wolverine. I have the member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, and he's the guardian of Hill's pondweed. The Minister of Health is the peregrine falcon's guardian. The member for Niagara Falls is the American water-willow. And the new member from Burlington is the honorary guardian of the hoary mountain mint.

I wanted to thank my friend Graham Murray from Graham Murray Research, who provides Inside Queen's Park, which we all get, because he loaned me his cards so that I could read out more members and their honorary responsibilities.

I also want to read directly from the information piece that was provided by Environmental Defence, because I

think that one little paragraph in here outlines really clearly why this is important legislation and why, as my friend Gilles Bisson and other members of my caucus have indicated, we are very supportive of updated, upgraded, new endangered species legislation. Of course we have some concerns around consultation and other issues, but we do think it's the right thing to do.

Ontario needs a new Endangered Species Act now. Here's what they say at Environmental Defence:

"Ontario is home to nearly 40% of all of the endangered species in Canada. Most of Ontario's endangered species continue to decline. For those species for which trends are known, over 75% are either already gone from Ontario or are on their way to disappearing.

"Fewer than 25% of the endangered species in Ontario receive protection under the current and outdated legislation."

I think that's a very succinct way of describing the crisis, if you will, in endangered species protection in Ontario at this point in time.

I did want to mention that attending the gathering that Environmental Defence put on this afternoon and this evening brought to mind for me the amount of debt we, as legislators, as people and as communities in Ontario, have to people in our communities who are active on environmental issues. I think that all of us know that many of these people are volunteers. Many of them don't get paid for the hours and hours they put in. The passion they show is unbelievable. The work they put in is unmeasured. It's just massive amounts of work and dedication that environmental activists put into the volunteer hours and the work they do for the purpose of protecting our environment. Whether that is through endangered species activism or other activism, the bottom line is that I think we owe a great debt and a great deal of gratitude to the people who are participators in environmental initiatives in our communities.

I thought I would use that as a bit of a segue to talk about some of the things that are happening in my own community in regard to environmental protection and particularly in regard to endangered species and endangered habitat. It was through being elected to city council, when I was a member of city council in Hamilton, that I became much more aware of, much more educated on and much more engaged in some of the environmental issues that face the city of Hamilton. Of course, the ward I used to represent at that time and that I love so much, ward 2, was the home—at least part of it—to major initiatives that were ongoing and that many members may be aware of, which is called a remedial action plan. Hamilton Harbour is a very polluted hot spot in the Great Lakes, as many people know, and so along with many other communities in Ontario and in Canada, remedial action plans have been put in place to try to turn around the degradation of the environment that has occurred in those areas. The purpose of the Hamilton Harbour remedial action plan is "to bring about sustainable natural ecosystems in Hamilton Harbour and its entire watershed, and to improve the potential for more extensive

recreational uses while maintaining the harbour's and the watershed's essential economic function."

The vision of the remedial action plan is that, "People living in the harbour's watershed have a vision of Hamilton Harbour as a vibrant centrepiece in their community's life. They look towards a time when the environment will be balanced, friendly, accessible, clean and humming with diversity. They see the pleasure of recreation mixed with prosperity from use of the harbour as an essential marine transportation link. They hope that what is a vision for them will be a reality for generations to come."

I hearken back to the member for Timmins–James Bay's remarks when he talked about the fact that this endangered species legislation is not just about us here in the day, but also about the generations to come—our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren—and the legacy we leave behind in terms of the richness or lack thereof of our species that walk our earth, swim in our ponds and grow in our fields and forests.

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The remedial action plan is a plan that is undertaken by a number of stakeholders; the stakeholders are called the Bay Area Implementation Team. That team has a number of member organizations, because again, it's not a matter of the work of one organization or group, but many, that accomplish some of these major changes in the way that our environment is being addressed: the Bay Area Restoration Council; the city of Burlington; the city of Hamilton; Conservation Halton; Dofasco; Fisheries and Oceans Canada; Environment Canada; Hamilton conservation authority; Hamilton Harbour RAP office; Hamilton Port Authority; Hamilton Waterfront Trust, of which I used to be a board member; McMaster University; Ontario Ministry of the Environment; Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; the regional municipality of Halton; the Royal Botanical Gardens; and Stelco Hamilton. You'll notice some major industry players as well, and the remedial action plan group has been able to engage a number of our industrial partners in the efforts around the remedial action plan and the remediation of Hamilton Harbour.

There are two particular groups that I thought it was important to talk about in the context of endangered species and the work that's happening in Hamilton around endangered species. One is the Bay Area Restoration Council, which is a partner in the remedial action plan. I want to raise them because the Bay Area Restoration Council is largely a volunteer-based group that has been working tirelessly to assess and promote the cleanup and projects of cleanup for the Hamilton Harbour and its watershed. They work with all of the partners described in the previous remarks around the RAP, but also they have a vision that sees a multi-use harbour that balances vibrant and diverse ecosystems with opportunities for recreation and the economic engine of our region. So you'll see that their mission is very similar.

The Bay Area Restoration Council is a group that has worked so, so hard in Hamilton to see the vision of the remedial action plan come to life. They are constantly undertaking projects, seminars and efforts to turn the harbour around. People say, “What is the big deal with Hamilton Harbour?” The bottom line is that the harbour has been misused and abused significantly over the industrial history of Hamilton, and now it’s starting to come back because of the efforts of some of these organizations. But it has not been a pretty sight over the years to watch the marshlands, particularly at Cootes Paradise, deplete and deplete until finally there is very, very little marshland at all. The biggest problem was an invading species that was spawning in the harbour—in Cootes Paradise, actually, from the harbour—called the carp. The carp is an invasive fish that was going into the Cootes Paradise marshlands and basically destroying all the other fish and the habitat that the other fish needed to survive. So the Royal Botanical Gardens has been working diligently on something called the Cootes Paradise fishway, and we’re now in a situation, very proudly, where a number of fish are being identified as having come back to the harbour after so many years of the RBG’s work with the fishway. The fishway basically stops those carp in their tracks and prevents them from spawning in Cootes Paradise and prevents the invasive nature of that fish from further destroying the harbour marshlands. In fact, it says here—and this is from the RBG website:

“Decline and Recovery of Cootes Paradise:

“Once nearly 100% covered by emergent and submergent aquatic plants, the extent of marsh vegetation has declined to 85% cover in the 1930s, and to only 15% in 1985. A variety of stresses were responsible for this decline. Human development and farming in the watershed contaminated the marsh’s tributary streams with sewage effluent, eroded soil, and chemical runoff. Within the marsh, carp activity physically damaged and destroyed the marsh plants. Carp activity and eroded soil from the watershed also muddy the marsh water, limiting light penetration and plant growth. Controlled lake water levels and the introduction of non-native plant species have also disrupted marsh ecology. For the restoration of Cootes Paradise to be successful, RBG and other partners in the HH-RAP agreed that an effective carp control program and pollution abatement programs in the watershed were necessary.”

I’m telling you, if you have a chance in spring to go to the fishway, it is absolutely amazing to watch the work that gets done there in Hamilton at the fishway with the RBG fishway project.

Interestingly enough, when I picked up the RBG website, because I knew when this endangered species issues was coming that there were a lot of issues in Hamilton that were directly related to this bill, I was surprised to see that one of the first things that came up was in regard to the efforts that the RBG makes, and this is why the government needs to fund the RBG appropriately. They’re not just the Royal Botanical Gardens

where people go and see wonderful gardens—they are, but guess what? The Royal Botanical Gardens works on protecting endangered plant life, growing endangered plant life and making sure we continue to have rich plant life in the province that would otherwise be endangered. Please, please, it’s not just a matter of passing a bill like the Endangered Species Act; it’s a matter of making sure that appropriate funding accrues to organizations like the RBG that are primarily and scientifically involved in endangered plant life and in this other project that they’re working on with the fisheries, the marshlands, as well as the ecosystems that are involved with the marshlands, including of course the fish and the other aquatic vegetation and animals that exist around there.

But I was starting to say that the first thing I came upon was this indication that the Sunfish Pond embankment restoration project is another project they are undertaking: Sunfish Pond embankment. Well, lo and behold, my card says that I’m the honorary guardian of the orange-spotted sunfish. Now maybe “orange-spotted” has something to do with my political affiliation, which I think is, again, very clever of the group. Nonetheless, I think one of the other members was talking about the fact that none of this is coincidental, in terms of the species that particular members were honorary guardians of, or identified as honorary guardians of, because they do have a relationship back to the members’ ridings. And you know what? I have so many things here that I wanted to share with the assembly tonight in regard to what is happening in Hamilton.

Today there is an article—and coincidentally, right? Today, coincidentally, in our Hamilton Spectator, there is an article that says, “Residents Fight to Save Turtle Ponds.” These turtle ponds are not in my riding, particularly; they’re in the riding of the member for Stoney Creek. But what this says is, “A group of Stoney Creek residents are trying to stop development of townhouses on land once designated environmentally significant to save a rare, blue-spotted salamander found there.” I want to know who in this House is the honorary guardian of the blue-spotted salamander, because we might be enlisting your aid in Stoney Creek to guard against the possible destruction of the habitat of the blue-spotted salamander, which is in jeopardy because of some strange—some would say perhaps too strange—situation where there was an accidental lack of notification of a particular school board and then, lo and behold, all of a sudden, this is no longer an environmentally sensitive area. So here we are now: The school board is going to try to sell the land and allow development, and lo and behold, the blue-spotted salamander and the blue-spotted salamander’s habitat, being the turtle ponds, is at risk.

Every single day in Ontario, more and more species become at risk because we’re not doing the right things or we’re not doing the things that we need to do to protect them from extinction. Yes, I ask the government: Make sure you’re thinking about this not just in the context of your bill that’s before us today, which we all hope can be amended and passed in this Legislature, once

it gets to a form that's reflective of the wishes of all stakeholders involved, but you need to fund organizations like the RBG, and you need to be careful about the kinds of approvals that are being provided for organizations to simply, at the stroke of a pen, have the loss of, the non-existence of or the disappearance of environmentally sensitive areas, designated environmentally sensitive areas.

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Other members have spoken about the lack of funding, for example, to the Ministry of Natural Resources and the fact that a lot of the enforcement levers or the enforcement opportunities, whether it's for this bill or others, rest with the Ministry of Natural Resources. If you're not funding that ministry appropriately—again, there has been some significant criticism of a slash in funding to that ministry's budget by this government. So it's not good enough to just have the trappings of the legislation. You need to really put your money where your mouth is and you need to put your commitment to the test when all of these issues are coming up with the government.

I want to finish by indicating once again that there is no doubt that myself, personally, and the other members of my caucus are looking forward to having updated endangered species legislation in this province. But once again, it's important to remind members on the government side that there are a number of stakeholders who are legitimately concerned about the lack of consultation that has occurred. The need for public hearings is significant. I would urge you to ensure that you're really taking the time to engage First Nations, particularly. As well, other members have mentioned the issue of people who make their living off the land. Yes, that includes First Nations. It also includes people from rural and farm communities, as well as resource extraction communities, I'm sure.

So if all of these are brought to the table, I think all Ontarians would agree this is important legislation. But let's get it right, let's fund it appropriately, and let's make sure we're doing everything in every aspect of this government's work to make sure species are no longer endangered.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Oraziotti: It's a pleasure to add a couple of comments to the remarks of the member from Hamilton East. I certainly heard the opposition members this evening making some very constructive comments on Bill 184.

I think we're all in agreement that we need to pass this legislation. It's long overdue. Both the Conservatives and the NDP had the opportunity to raise this issue, to move forward on this issue, and it certainly didn't happen on their watch.

I also want to address the issue around funding. The Ministry of Natural Resources budget, 2003-04, was \$541 million; today it is \$726 million. That's an increase of \$185 million. This year alone, the Ministry of Natural Resources budget was increased by \$44 million or 6.4%. I know the opposition likes to play games with one-time forest firefighting money. But the reality is that the base budget to the Ministry of Natural Resources has in-

creased from \$541 million to \$726 million—\$185 million—under our government.

This bill is something that we need to move forward with. The last time it was updated was 1971. It has been 36 years. We are not capturing all of those species that we can in terms of protecting their habitat and our ability to ensure that they become and stay part of Ontario's legacy. Only 42 are on the endangered species list out of 176 species.

This is also a piece of legislation that needs to move forward to meet our obligation under the national accord. The Species at Risk Act, the federal legislation, was passed in 2004. As part of that agreement, provinces needed to live up to their end of the bargain and they haven't done that. We're doing that.

Consultation is ongoing. We're certainly going to have hearings here at Queen's Park. I'm going to be in Kingston tomorrow for some stakeholder consultations, and we look forward to hearing the feedback.

Mr. Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech of the member from Hamilton East on Bill 184, but I first of all will comment on the comments of the member for Sault Ste. Marie to do with the MNR budget.

I have the budget right here before me. It shows that the interim spending last year was \$762 million. It's \$726 million this year. That's down \$36 million. His defence of that is that there was one-time forest fire spending last year. Well, from what I hear from the reports up north, this year is looking worse than last year. How do you know how many forest fires there are going to be this year? Do you have a crystal ball, for crying out loud, that you know there are not going to be any forest fires? All the clippings show there is less water and the forest fires could be worse this year than last year, so it's a very poor defence.

Getting back to the Endangered Species Act, what we're pushing for on this bill is consultation. I've heard from so many groups that want to be heard on this bill. Here's one: the Ontario Property and Environmental Rights Alliance. They say, "However, in our view, the subject act as now proposed reflects a worthwhile initiative betrayed by a questionable process and dire consequences for another endangered species: Ontario's rural taxpayer. An appointed advisory panel where citizens directly affected by the proposed Species at Risk Act were not represented endorsed this legislation and reported little or no meaningful public opposition to same." I've heard from so many different groups on this legislation, whether it be the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Northwestern Ontario Sportsmen's Alliance, the Ontario Fur Managers, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters—who pointed to the federal act and showed the audit that was recently done on the federal act and how we could learn a lot from that—the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and on and on. That's just a partial list of all the various groups that are concerned about having their say on this bill. So I say to the government, listen to them.

Mr. Bisson: This cold of mine is going to get me yet.

I just have to say I agree with the previous comments you were making in regard to the MNR budget. The government says, "Oh, you can't predict forest fires." That's exactly the point. They basically lessened the budget of the MNR this year. Last year, we know that in fact there were fewer forest fires than there were in previous years, and they're telling us that you can't make any predictions about what forest fires are going to be, yet they're trying to say—it's such a convoluted argument.

Anyway, back to the legislation.

My, this is really bad. My voice is sounding as it did about 40 years ago.

Ms. Horwath: A second childhood.

Mr. Bisson: It's my second childhood. That's what happens when you turn 50, but that's another story. By the way, did you know that it was somebody's birthday today?

Ms. Horwath: It was.

Mr. Bisson: It was, and we're not going to say who. It wasn't a caucus member—but that's another story. Laurie Orrett turned 50 years old today. Laurie Orrett, chief of staff for Michael Prue, turned 50 today.

Ms. Horwath: She's going to love you for announcing that.

Mr. Bisson: I just thought I'd put this in the House so everybody knows. I'm going to send her the Hansard tomorrow, and she isn't going to talk to me anymore.

Ms. Horwath: Men are so sensitive to these issues.

Mr. Bisson: I'm going to be 50 on May 14, and I'm proud of it—that I've been able to be on this planet as long as I have and turn 50. It's a milestone; imagine that—and I have a 30-year-old daughter. Anyway, I'm off topic, Speaker. Please bring me back to the topic.

The topic is the legislation. I want to say a couple of things. I thought the member for Hamilton East laid out quite well what some of the issues are and talked about it from the perspective of her community. This is the point that I want to make: It's all local. We understand that at the end of the day, no matter where we live in the province of Ontario, this issue is going to affect us one way or another. I think this is the point: We want to make sure that we get it right. I think all members of this House owe it to future generations and quite frankly to the current generation to take our time in committee to make sure that we get this legislation right so that we can protect local habitat when it comes to animals and others.

Mr. Crozier: The debate tonight is an interesting one. I think there are a lot of good points being made. The member for Hamilton East has added to this debate in a positive way. It's kind of interesting, when you think about it, that we're all in favour of this kind of legislation. But isn't it kind of a crime that in a perfect world we wouldn't need this legislation—but we do, because there are people out there, there are some in our society, who wouldn't give a darn about a plant, a bird, a tree, a snake—

Mr. Bisson: A polar bear.

Mr. Crozier: A polar bear, yes. There are some similarities there. But there are some who would not do anything to protect the species. Why do we have endangered species in the first place? Because we haven't looked after those that share our environment.

You know, I've not been a raging environmentalist in my lifetime, but you think about it, and you know, these birds, these animals, the flora, the fauna, all have just as much right to exist on this planet as we human beings do. Sometimes I think we forget that. We think that we're here to make money, to use up all our natural resources. Some day, as I said in earlier comments, we might be the endangered species if we in fact don't do the kinds of things that we're discussing here this evening.

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The Acting Speaker: I'll return to the member for Hamilton East.

Ms. Horwath: I want to thank the members from Sault Ste. Marie, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Timmins–James Bay and Essex for their remarks. One of the things I was thinking about, particularly as the member from Essex was talking, is how easy it really is to just add that little bit of attention span, to broaden people's attention spans a little bit and get support in communities for initiatives that are aimed at protecting various endangered species. Certainly, in the context of debating this bill, I think we're all becoming more enlightened, those of us who have not had an opportunity to engage in any of these discussions or think about these issues. But we know that there are many people in our communities, as I mentioned in my earlier remarks, who are very engaged. If it weren't for them, I don't think we would even be debating an Endangered Species Act at all.

Some of those people in my community—I think off the top of my head of John Hall, who has been very active with the RAP in Hamilton; Anne Redish; Marilyn Baxter. I know people from the city of Hamilton who were very involved as well; in fact, staff now at the Waterfront Trust who are very involved in that work as well as the Parks Department at the city. So it's volunteers and NGOs and governments, all of these groups together that can truly make a difference for us.

As I mentioned, the remedial action plan particularly, in Hamilton, is one of the areas of concern of the Great Lakes water quality agreement between Canada and the United States, and there are some 43 areas of concern. Hamilton Harbour is one of the areas of concern, and I only hope that as we put this legislation in place through the debate, we also look at other threats to that particular area of concern. I know there are really big jobs we need to do around Randall Reef and other issues we need to look at, and I look forward to working with the government to resolve those as well.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): It's a pleasure to participate in tonight's debate on Bill 184. I'm going to disappoint members of the Legislature and perhaps those watching at home by saying that unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to make it to the reception tonight.

For those tuning in, they should know that an organization, Environmental Defence, had a reception tonight for members of provincial Parliament, where they presented a series of cards where each one of us has been assigned an endangered species. It sort of has become the norm tonight to stand up as you begin your speech and say which one you represent. Unfortunately, I don't know which endangered species I represent, but I do want to congratulate Environmental Defence for the work they do in raising the profile of this issue and bringing home the importance of it.

Indeed, I stand here tonight to speak in support of Bill 184, as so many other members have this evening. If passed, I think we're safe to know that in Ontario we would have one of the strongest pieces of species-at-risk legislation in North America. I stand here tonight in support of this bill not simply because it's a government bill and I'm a member of the government party, but because of the commentary that has come forward from two groups. The first I think are some key stakeholders and experts in it. Just to share a couple of quotes—because it's been noted tonight, a few people have said there isn't general support for it. Well, I think there is among some of the key players in this. Environmental Defence, I mentioned earlier, are having a reception here tonight for members of provincial Parliament. Aaron Freeman, the policy director, had this to say: "We thank Minister Ramsay, Premier McGuinty and the clear majority of Ontario residents who support this new legislation. By working together, we can make sure our natural heritage is protected for all time."

Rob Wright, counsel for Sierra Legal, had this to say: "If passed in its current form—and Ontario deserves no less—this will be the best endangered species law in the country."

Wendy Francis, the director of conservation and science for Ontario Nature, had this to say: "The new stewardship fund accompanying the bill will help ensure that the costs of protecting rare plants and animals do not fall solely on landowners."

I could go on with the list of stakeholders who have come out to congratulate us on the bill and the process leading up to it. But, as I said, my support for the bill is not only because experts and leaders in this field have come out in support of it; it's also because I represent a community—as do so many; I think all members in this Legislature—where the environment is increasingly becoming a matter of concern.

In my community of Waterloo region, one of the big issues we face is growth. Although growth should be welcomed, although growth leads to prosperity, and in the case of my community is being accompanied by great prosperity, at the same time everyone wants to make sure that that growth occurs in an environmentally friendly way and a way that is sustainable. I think that from this government you have seen measure after measure, whether it's the Clean Water Act, whether it's Bill 198, the Ontario water resource act which we debated earlier today, or the climate change plan that's going to be an-

nounced by the government shortly, or the work that has been done by Minister Caplan on the Places to Grow Act to make sure that there isn't urban sprawl. We've seen an approach by this government which says that growth and prosperity can go hand in hand with environmental stewardship, and I think Bill 184 builds on that.

The key point I think about Bill 184, to maybe respond to some of the comments that have come across from members of the opposition this evening, is about the consultative nature leading up to it. As has been pointed out by other speakers, this is the first overhaul of the legislation since 1971. I think there was an awareness amongst all stakeholders in Ontario that it was sorely out of date and that we had to work to move forward. The type of consultation that did take place in putting forward this legislation was wide-ranging. We heard from members of the public, aboriginal organizations, land developers, environmentalists, rural communities, municipalities and the resource industry sectors as we set out to come forward with a plan of how we wanted to move forward.

Now we have a bill in place, a bill which I'm pleased to see seems to have a fair amount of support on all sides of the Legislature, and the government is committed to moving forward with consultations at the committee stage, which are going to complement what happened in the lead-up to it.

Again, you don't have to take my word for it. This is Richard Hibma, the chair of Conservation Ontario, who had this to say: "Conservation Ontario commends the government of Ontario for undertaking a review of the Endangered Species Act which will result in improved protection for species at risk." And this is the key point: "The province led a very inclusive consultation process during the review and the conservation authorities were pleased to participate."

We've heard from stakeholders—certainly I've heard it from my community—the importance of this type of legislation, which has been complimented by so many other members, by this government. I applaud it. I look forward to the committee hearings to make sure that we hear again from a wide range of stakeholders and take their views into account. I stand here tonight in support of the bill and urge all members of the Legislature to join us in making sure that Bill 184 is passed as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Elliott: I appreciate the opportunity to comment briefly on the remarks made by the member from Kitchener Centre. As he was, I was also unable to attend the gathering sponsored this afternoon by Environmental Defence. So I too am not quite sure what endangered species I'm meant to represent, and I'm a little bit afraid to ask. But, perhaps, if somebody knows, they could enlighten me at some point later on this evening. I would like to add my comments to the points that he has raised and also the points raised earlier by the member from Hamilton East with respect to the need that we have to thank the members of our local communities who have contributed to environmental protection over the years

and who have devoted so much of their time and energies to it.

I would just like to comment briefly on several of the organizations in my local community that have been instrumental in preserving some of our important wetlands that, of course, support both the flora and fauna that depend on it; that is an environmental movement started some years ago by the Save Lynde Marsh group and also by the Friends of Second Marsh, who have done a lot of really important work to preserve our natural environment for all the residents of our communities.

Even though we all live pretty far from the natural world in our daily lives now, I think that most of our fondest experiences and memories are related to some of the experiences we've had in our natural surroundings. I can say that some of my fondest memories, that I remember quite vividly with my three sons—who are now virtually grown up—were as a Beaver leader and a Cub leader some years ago, going on some outings with some of the children and noting the delight that they took in the natural surroundings. I think it brings home to us how important it is that we work together to preserve and protect our natural surroundings for our children, our grandchildren and for generations to come.

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Ms. Horwath: I want to remark to the member who spoke from Kitchener Centre, and I just have to warn some of the members from the government side who are buying the line that there has been extensive consultation—I hearken to remarks that I was hoping to be able to bring into my speech earlier today from the member from Timmins—James Bay when he got an opportunity to speak to this bill. Here's what he had to say: "I've gotten all kinds of letters from First Nations and others, from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, from the Ontario Forestry Association, from numerous—and I've got to say 'numerous'—First Nations tribal councils and others in PTOs, who said they've really not had a chance, for the most part, to be able to talk to the government about any of this."

Then he goes on to list a number of individuals—Mike Carpenter, the chief of Attawapiskat. He speaks about Whitewater Lake First Nation, which wrote him a letter saying there had been no consultation: "So here's Whitewater First Nation basically saying, 'We've had all kinds of meetings with MNR, and never at any time, in any of the meetings we had with MNR, did somebody raise this whole issue of species-at-risk legislation.'"

He then goes on to talk about Wapekeka First Nation; he talks about the Independent First Nations Alliance out of Sioux Lookout, representing Big Trout Lake, and the list, unfortunately and disturbingly, goes on and on. So please be careful; don't just buy the lines that you get in your briefing notes. The fact of the matter is there are legitimate concerns about lack of consultation on this bill, and we just want to see that that's going to be addressed. I'm hearing from government members that it's going to be addressed through a hearings process, and I'm very pleased about that.

I want to end off by saying to the member who was speaking earlier about community groups—we too have many in Hamilton. I think just off the top of my head of Environment Hamilton, the Hamilton Naturalists' Club, Friends of Red Hill Valley; we have numerous groups and activists who work on these issues daily, and they need to be thanked.

Mr. Qadri: As you'll be aware, Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act, is about innovation, sustained protection, it's scientifically grounded and of course it's intelligent stewardship of our environment.

Mention was made by the MPP for Hamilton East about consultation. All of these bills and these procedures of the legislation are works in progress. For example, the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie will be helping to conduct hearings with the public on this particular bill I understand in Kingston; our Minister of Natural Resources will soon be in Thunder Bay; consultations began a year ago with the aboriginal communities and so on. So we're a little bit puzzled in terms of the call, or the I guess the plaint, about a lack of consultation.

Let's actually talk about and reference what outside individuals, stakeholders, individuals who have a deep and abiding understanding and love and passion for the environment, say. For example, Dr. Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence, says: "The new Endangered Species Act is a significant step forward for Ontarians and the natural heritage we all value so highly. This new legislation will provide an inclusive, science-based and effective framework within which to balance different environmental and economic priorities." That's what our outside stakeholders are saying, and of course we could furnish to this Legislature and particularly to the members opposite probably an entire album of such quotations. So it's much more than just what's been provided to us in our speaking notes, as was mentioned earlier.

Simply to say, it's a bill that talks about innovation, scientifically grounded, sustained protection and intelligent stewardship.

I'll conclude by simply saying we must take care of the earth, because a good planet is hard to find.

Mr. Barrett: In keeping with comments this evening, I would commend Environmental Defence. I am known, as of this evening, to have adopted the prothonotary warbler. In fact, a few weeks ago I attended a fundraiser at the Long Point Foundation for Conservation. It was held at the Vittoria community centre and they were auctioning off an artist's proof of a Robert Bateman painting of a prothonotary warbler. My father purchased it that evening. The Long Point foundation has a philosophy of recognizing landowners and the part they play in not only conserving wildlife habitat but also, by extension, the kinds of species we're referring to this evening.

The member for Kitchener Centre, in very brief remarks this evening, made mention of the growth and prosperity in the Kitchener area. We know there are somewhere between 200,000 and 400,000 people coming to that area in the next 25 or 30 years. In the greater

Golden Horseshoe area there may be up to four million people coming in the next 20 or 25 years. I think the member indicated that—well, I actually question this theory that you can have growth and prosperity and a healthy environment at the same time. Species will suffer in your area, sir. You will end up with species remaining like the Norway rat, the American possum, the raccoon, the sparrow and the starling. I'm afraid that's the future your area will have, given this drive for growth and prosperity and population growth. That is actually one reason that a year ago the Six Nations people occupied a subdivision down my way, because of their concerns for this kind of rapid population growth.

The Acting Speaker: I'll return to the member for Kitchener Centre, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Milloy: I want to thank my colleagues who commented on my speech, and I'm going to begin with the comments of the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant. I don't share that member's pessimism about the environment and about growth and prosperity. The simple fact is: We don't have a choice. No government in this country, no government in this world, no matter what its political stripe, has a choice. We as a planet are going to continue to grow; we're going to continue to produce. At the same time, we have to find a way to work with the environment, to live with the environment, to make sure the environment continues and is not put in danger by this growth and prosperity. That's the challenge of every government in this world. I think the answer to that actually comes in the comments from his colleague the member for Whitby–Ajax, who spoke about the role of the community and the role of the individual.

I think environmental policy is one area where people actually feel they can make a difference. Whether it's putting in energy-efficient light bulbs, engaging in recycling or getting involved in a community group, organization or initiative, all of us by working together on small measures can actually make a difference in the world. I reject the pessimism of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant. If you accept his pessimism, the planet is doomed, and if the planet is doomed, I'm not sure what we're doing here tonight at 9:15. I believe in the future of this planet, and the reason why is the hope and support of the types of community organizations the member for Whitby–Ajax spoke about, and also from individuals in general.

I think about my own community—I'm going to put in a brief commercial; I have 20 seconds. I know that on Saturday morning at the Stanley Park Community Centre, people from around Kitchener and the neighbourhood of Stanley Park, where I live, will be coming to do a cleanup in honour of Earth Day. In my mind, that sort of cleanup in honour of Earth Day symbolizes the commitment to the environment and the commitment to the future we have to hold dear.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

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Mrs. Elliott: I'm very pleased to join this debate somewhat more formally on Bill 184, the Endangered

Species Act. At the outset, I would like to indicate that I'm very proud it was a Progressive Conservative government that first introduced the Endangered Species Act in 1971 to protect endangered species and wildlife. That's a tradition we certainly intend to uphold.

Having said that, it has been a number of years since this legislation was last reviewed and in those ensuing years the world has changed pretty dramatically, so I do commend the Minister of Natural Resources for his initiative in bringing this review forward. It is something that I think all members, from the conversations and the discussions we've heard tonight, are anxious to cooperate with and to proceed with, because the fact is that we do have over 200 endangered species in Ontario right now, representing something like 40% of all the endangered species across Canada.

We have a lot of work to do, and of course time is of the essence in order to make sure that the endangered species we're speaking of now do not become extinct. But it is important to recognize that we need to get this legislation right and we need to make sure we've listened to all the voices that need to be heard—all the voices that are going to be directly impacted by this legislation—to make sure we do have the legislation right. Although we have heard from a number of the government members this evening on the issue of consultation—it may well be that a number of groups were consulted before this legislation was brought forward, but I would submit that not all those groups have been heard from. We have certainly heard from some of them, and some of them have of course been very vocal in the media on the issue of not being properly consulted before the legislation was brought forward.

I would like to mention some of those groups, such as the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, the Ontario Forest Industries Association, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association and of course many First Nations groups. I think it is worth spending a little bit of time on some of the comments that have been made by those groups with respect to their view that they have not been consulted regarding this legislation. I'd just like to read a few quotations.

One is from Michael Power, the mayor of Geraldton and president of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, who said on March 12, "No one that I know at the municipal level or among the resource stewardship community is opposing a species at risk act, but considering what is at stake, we want to ensure the new legislation and regulations are truly effective in protecting species at risk and that jobs and economic prosperity are not unduly sacrificed in the process."

Secondly, from Lynn Peterson, the mayor of Thunder Bay, who said on March 12: "No one is saying that we shouldn't be taking action to address species at risk, but we want to make absolutely certain that we get this legislation right. It's going to be with us for years to come and

we shouldn't be rushing headlong into it if we don't know what the effects may be."

Thirdly, from Paul Mistele, vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, who said on March 26: "A fast-track approach to this legislation will not give us the ability to inform and involve the thousands of farmers who may be affected. It is imperative that the government put the emphasis on engagement, not expedience."

Moving on to comments made by Jamie Lim, president and CEO of the Ontario Forest Industries Association: "Forestry has been among groups of land stewards who've been willing partners in modernizing the Endangered Species Act, offering constructive, practical recommendations. But consultation to date has been nothing more than government telling stakeholders what the act will be."

Finally, Marvin Pupeza, the Canadian Energy and Paperworkers national representative, said, "It appears as if the government is trying to keep this bill off the public radar screen, and that is troublesome. If this becomes law and impacts our industries negatively we can expect more layoffs, more families leaving Ontario and more communities in turmoil. We've already lost 120,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario and we can't afford to lose more. We need to get this legislation right, not fast."

I think it's fair to say that there are a number of voices that wish to be heard from. Whatever consultation may have taken place—and I accept that there was consultation, but simply not enough—we need to make sure that all of those parties are informed and do have the opportunity to make their representations in order to make this legislation be what it is meant to be. To those who would suggest that this will needlessly drag out this process and that the time for action is now, I would suggest that those consultations could take place, if the government wishes to do so, on a fairly quick basis. This could happen within a very short period of time. The process really needs to take place across the province, not just in Toronto, an urban centre, but in many places across the province, particularly in the north, where there are a number of constituencies that do need to be heard from.

The other issue, though, that I would like to raise is stewardship, and there is a concern that exists with respect to the stewardship aspect of this legislation. The minister has indicated that \$18 million has been set aside for stewardship, an amount of \$4.5 million per year over four years, to properly fund the species at risk in Ontario stewardship program. Again, I'm not in a position to know this personally, but I do accept the recommendations made by a number of groups that this simply is not enough money to allow for this program to be properly funded and properly maintained, especially considering the fact that the Ministry of Natural Resources has seen its budget cut by \$36 million from last year, and there are many groups who are wondering how they're going to be able to continue even their basic operations without funding this very specific and very important stewardship measure.

I would just comment on some of the comments that have been made by other stakeholders in this process. I would like to quote from the comments made by Wendy Francis, the director of conservation and science for Ontario Nature, who indicated, "We agree the new act needs a properly resourced stewardship fund for landowners. The cost of protecting species cannot be placed solely on those who steward the land."

And Robert Wright, the counsel for Sierra Legal, said, "The province should announce proper stewardship funding and incentives at the same time as the act is introduced in March. The suggested approach of combining strong new legislation with proper funding would create a win-win situation for wildlife and landowners."

I think that's the essence of it, that we need to ensure that we do set up those win-win situations for all of the parties involved so we have a situation where, like with the greenbelt legislation and the Clean Water Act—no one would suggest that those are not proper initiatives, no one would suggest that we should not be doing all of those things and protecting endangered species; of course, we should be. But I think the point that we should mention is the fact that if we all, as a society, want to protect clean water, endangered species and greenbelt legislation, we shouldn't require that only one group in society bear the brunt of paying for those initiatives that are so valued in society. We need to make sure that the cost as well as the benefit of all of these initiatives are shared by our communities as a whole, and I think that's what we're trying to get at when we urge the government to engage in further consultation to make sure that we hear from everyone who is going to be affected.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to add my comments to this discussion.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to make some remarks on the speech of the member from Whitby–Ajax. I think her remarks were very wise in terms of making sure that government members acknowledge and recognize that what they're considering to be consultation sometimes isn't received as such by groups in communities, so simply telling stakeholders what you're doing and not actually engaging in a discussion does not constitute consultation per se. I think she makes a very important distinction between simply providing information and actually engaging community organizations in consultation in regard to this bill, and I know the member raised a number of other bills that the government purports to be bringing forward in terms of protection of air and water and land etc. I think there are some significant stakeholders who are saying, "Not only were we not consulted, we don't feel like we were consulted, and in fact we think we have something important to share in regard to how this endangered species legislation particularly is going to impact our community, our business, our way of life, our jobs." These are not issues to be regarded lightly by the government. These are extremely important issues. Again, I don't think anyone in this House would think that any of those issues are stoppers, but they certainly do

put on the government an obligation to hear from those people and to indicate either (a) you understand that their concern exists and that you're prepared to amend legislation to reduce the impact or (b) you're aware that their concern exists and you're not going to amend the legislation to reduce the impact. Either way, the bottom line is it's just a matter of appropriate due process, and I think the member for Whitby–Ajax brought those issues to light very effectively.

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Mr. Oraziotti: I'm pleased to comment on the remarks made by the member for Whitby–Ajax. I thought her remarks were insightful and helpful to the process. In fact, I think the discussion this evening has a tone that is fairly supportive of Bill 184. I think all members in this House recognize that Bill 184 is necessary. The last time was 36 years ago, 1971, when an endangered species bill was put in place in this province, and it is in dire need of being updated. We have only 42 of the 176 identified endangered species protected, and we're not doing enough. We all recognize that.

While I hear the opposition members make comments around consultation, be assured that our government is mindful of that. We are working through the specifics of the bill and it will be in committee and at hearings. Consultation began about a year ago. Tomorrow I will be in Kingston having dialogue with some 40-odd representatives of various organizations who are coming forward to provide their comments. We were in Windsor; the minister is going to Thunder Bay. Consultation is going on and has gone on for some time, so I want to assure members of this House that that is taking place and will continue to take place. It will also take place during committee hearings for the bill.

But I think we all need to be very frank about the fact that the legislation needs to be passed. It's long overdue. We have wide, unanimous support in this province for greater protection of our endangered species. It is part of our obligation under the federal Species at Risk Act of 2004 and under the national accord that the province do this. So we're living up to our obligation with the federal government under the national accord and are pleased to do so.

Mr. Miller: The member for Sault Ste. Marie just said this legislation needs to get passed. Well, if it needs to get passed, why did you wait so long? Why did you wait till the 11th hour in your mandate to introduce the legislation? Why are you rushing it through? I think the member for Whitby–Ajax said, "We need to do it right, not fast."

Obviously, we're hearing from so many groups that are concerned. I see the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters point to the funding of it. They point to the federal program: "From 2000 through 2005, the federal government spent over \$200 million on their national strategy on species at risk. The recent budget added an additional \$110 million over two years, but the total funding is still less than 60% of the minimum needed by the core departments. In contrast, the province only

allocated \$4.5 million per year for the next four years in support of 184 species named under the act."

They go on to point out that a recent audit done of the federal program points out all kinds of problems:

"The following are just some of the revealing findings from a June 2006 evidence-based independent audit and formative evaluation of the federal species at risk program, compiled through 74 interviews with informants, federal employees and key stakeholder informants.

"Many of the legislative, resourcing, and process problems that are being experienced as a result of the federal program will be repeated in Ontario if the proposed endangered species legislation Bill 184 is passed as is."

That's from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

I listed many of the other organizations, including the Ontario Forestry Association and the Ontario forest coalition. I know our leader was up in Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie last week—your hometown, member from Sault Ste. Marie—and there he heard from all kinds of people who came up to him at the events he was at and raised the issue of wanting to have input on this bill. So I say to the government, let the committee go out and get public input on this bill, as has been requested by so many different individuals and groups.

Mr. Milloy: I'm pleased to comment on the speech by the member for Whitby–Ajax and on other comments that have been made by some of my colleagues. I think we have to go back to first principles here.

This Endangered Species Act was passed in 1971. It has taken 36 years to update it, and I'm proud that our government has taken action. Again, I think you have to put it in a timing framework. In May 2006, we launched an extensive review of the old 1971 Endangered Species Act to find out what stakeholders were thinking, to find out what various groups were thinking. As I mentioned in my speech earlier, this included aboriginal organizations, land developers, environmentalists, rural communities, municipalities and the resource industry sector. What you've heard tonight, not only in the remarks I made but also from some of my colleagues here, is quote after quote from some leading environmentalists in Canada, praising our government for the leadership we've shown on this issue and also praising the legislation that has come forward.

Is it perfect legislation? Well, we're going out to committee, as my colleague the parliamentary assistant said, and we're going to have a chance to have more input from those stakeholders so they can express their concerns and we can hear from them as we move forward. But I think we can never lose sight of the fact that this is groundbreaking legislation. It has taken 36 years. I think it's long overdue, and I think the people of Ontario deserve this type of strong legislation which, if passed, will be the toughest in North America.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Whitby–Ajax has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Elliott: I'd like to thank the members for Hamilton East, Sault Ste. Marie, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Kitchener Centre for their comments, particularly the comments that were just made by the member from Kitchener Centre. I think we do applaud the government for this initiative and for bringing this legislation forward. All we want to press upon you is the need to make sure that we achieve the appropriate balance between and among all the groups that are going to be affected by this legislation. It's important to listen to all the constituencies who may or may not have been consulted but don't feel they've been consulted; they haven't been consulted fully; they have other things to bring to the table. There

are other things they think you need to know about before this legislation is passed.

We just want to make sure that at the end of the day there is a balance of legislation so that, as I indicated previously, no one group in our society is going to be burdened with the cost and responsibility for bringing to bear a good that is for the good of all of our society. That's all we're asking for, that you listen to all of those voices at the table to create the kind of balanced, sound legislation we all want to see happen.

The Acting Speaker: I wish to inform members that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 2118.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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