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**Thursday 3 April 2008**

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des débats  
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**Jeudi 3 avril 2008**

**Standing committee on  
public accounts**

2007 Annual Report,  
Auditor General:  
Ministry of Natural Resources

**Comité permanent des  
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Rapport annuel 2007,  
Vérificateur général :  
Ministère des Richesses  
naturelles

Chair: Norman W. Sterling  
Clerk: Katch Koch

Président : Norman W. Sterling  
Greffier : Katch Koch

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
COMPTES PUBLICS**

Thursday 3 April 2008

Jeudi 3 avril 2008

*The committee met at 0941 in committee room 1, following a closed session.*

**2007 ANNUAL REPORT,  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

**MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

Consideration of section 3.06, fish and wildlife program.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Good morning. My name is Norm Sterling. We are considering section 3.06 of the Auditor General's 2007 report on the fish and wildlife program. This was a choice by the Liberal caucus, to bring this particular matter before the committee. We have with us David Lindsay, the deputy minister of the Ministry of Natural Resources, and several of his officials.

I will say, Mr. Lindsay, before you are introduced, that in our closed session I informed all members of the committee that you are an avid birdwatcher, so watch what you say about the birds. I'll give you an opportunity to lead off, so go ahead, Mr. Lindsay.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Mr. Chairman, I know your experience with birds is pretty much limited to the golf course, so—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Yes, that's right. Pleased to see you again.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Mr. Lindsay, before you embark, I should mention that we have an official delegation from China, from Jiangsu province, who are primarily interested in the financial committees of this Legislature, so they are joining us.

Go ahead.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** First, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. We appreciate the opportunity to come and appear before you today. We're very pleased to respond to your invitation and speak to the Auditor General's review of the Ministry of Natural Resources, and particularly our fish and wildlife branch.

Let me begin by introducing some of my colleagues who are going to be helping me this morning. Charlie Lauer is the assistant deputy minister of the field services division. David de Launay, who is also with us this morning, is the assistant deputy minister of the science and information resources division. David Lynch is our

chief administrator and the ADM of corporate management. Kevin Wilson, to my immediate left, who has the main responsibility for the unit that the auditor reviewed this year, is our ADM of the natural resource management division. Because of my relative newness in this position, they all thought they should come out to either support me or correct me, so I appreciate that help.

As you know, the auditor's report did deal with findings in fiscal year 2006-07. We certainly welcome his input and recommendations for the program. Since the report was tabled, we have been working to respond to his suggestions.

An important contextual piece for today's discussions might be some good news that the ministry received in the budget just last week from Minister Duncan. Our base funding for the 2008-09 fiscal year is going to be set at \$780 million, which gives us a funding increase of approximately \$55 million year over year. So this will help us go a long way to addressing some of the issues the Auditor General identified and other things that we have as government priorities.

Over this past fiscal year, the government also made some significant capital investments in the ministry. These capital investments will give our staff on the ground better tools to do their jobs. As you know, we have a very large field services element to our program delivery as a ministry, and, in order to be able to do our work, we have successfully procured another 305 vehicles.

We will be taking receipt of another 756 new satellite phones. As you can appreciate, it's a very large province and a lot of the work from our parks staff and our forest firefighting units and others takes place in parts of the province that have no cellphone coverage. So the use of satellite phones is very important, not just to do our job but for health and safety reasons as well.

In addition to the 300-plus vehicles and the satellite phones, we're also taking receipt of two new helicopters to add to our fleet.

So, in addition to the operating dollars, the capital investment is very helpful in delivering our programs.

What I'd like to do in the brief time I have as an introduction is do three things. First, with your indulgence, I'd like to provide a little bit of context for what we do in the Ministry of Natural Resources, the immense scope of our ministry and the purpose that we have been given by the government; second, I'll talk briefly about

some of the recent challenges and achievements we've been addressing; and then I'll focus specifically on about eight items that were raised in the auditor's report.

Let me begin by talking about our purpose and mandate. In becoming deputy minister, it didn't take me too long to realize that the Ministry of Natural Resources has in fact one of the broadest mandates of any ministry of our government. You would know that our responsibility is for managing the resources of our province, but that is an easier phrase than what is really behind it.

I have some maps here, if we could maybe circulate them to members, just to give you a sense of the size of what we're dealing with here. The province of Ontario outlined on this schematic is overlaid on a map of Europe. You will see that the land mass of Ontario is greater than Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Switzerland combined. We're equivalent to the size of about seven countries in Europe.

We're managing resources in an area greater than a million square kilometres, and that area includes a quarter million lakes, hundreds of thousands of kilometres of streams and rivers, tens of thousands of species of plants and wildlife, and habitats that range from the tundra in the far north to the Canadian Shield and the Carolinian forests in the south. It's hard to imagine that one province in Canada has polar bears inhabiting the far north and prickly pear cactus growing wild in Point Pelee in the south—a huge range of habitats and diversity of species, and I won't even start on the birds today.

The diversity of species and habitats is matched by the diversity of public policy issues we've been asked to address. We certainly have a great diversity of stakeholders as well.

#### 0950

We've got Ministry of Natural Resources staff in 148 communities across the province. During the summer months, when our parks are fully operational and we have a particularly aggressive forest fire season, we could have our number of employees grow from 3,500 in the winter to over 7,600, more than doubling our staff in a fiscal year.

We manage and protect the forests, the fisheries, the wildlife, the parks, mineral aggregates and even our petroleum resources, in southwestern Ontario. The crown lands and the waters that we're responsible for make up 87% of the province's land mass. We enforce public and industry compliance with the laws that govern our resources. We're also responsible for protecting people, property and communities from forest fires, floods and other natural emergencies. We're a key player in the government's efforts to mitigate climate change. We deliver programs to help seek out alternative energy sources such as wind and water power. We work with conservation authorities and the Ministry of the Environment to ensure Ontario's water systems are clean, safe and reliable.

Managing and protecting Ontario's natural resources requires that we do much more than simply set fishing limits for any particular lake, determine the use of a particular piece of crown land, monitor a flood or fight a forest fire. We must develop policy and manage programs using an ecosystems approach. Each physical and biological component of the environment is connected and every management decision can have impacts on other parts of our environment.

We must constantly balance the three legs of the sustainable development stool that Gro Brundtland identified many years ago. In everything we do, the ministry must balance our economic, our social and our environmental impacts on resource management decisions. So our unique mix of scientific research, program delivery and policy development places us in a strategic position to help the province deal effectively with resource management and environmental challenges that we're facing in the 21st century.

The ministry is fulfilling that diverse mandate in managing our resources quite responsibly, I would say. As part of our management approach, we're constantly re-examining and adapting policies and programs to respond to changing knowledge, information, attitudes and opinions. That responsiveness to new policy thinking, new information and new circumstances is why we changed the provincial parks and crown reserves act, the first time it was changed in some 50 years. It's why we expanded partnerships we have in the conservation of various spaces and made it easier for southern Ontario landowners to voluntarily protect and restore the natural areas on their private property. It's why we produced the biodiversity strategy for the province. The ministry's responsiveness has also helped us to work with a new binational agreement to protect our waters and watersheds in the Great Lakes.

We can point with some considerable pride at the staff level, those who have been working on the new Endangered Species Act, to a piece of legislation that's coming into effect in June and will be the strongest of its type in all of North America. Clearly, it's important to remain in tune with the most up-to-date science and information and to respond to all of the challenges that face us. That's one of the reasons why we're so pleased to work with the Auditor General's report and adapt with changes in our programming to respond to the issues he's identified.

One of the large external challenges we're facing, not just as a ministry but as a province, and one of the biggest challenges we will face, is climate change. The effects of climate change will have a great impact on Ontario's ecosystem.

Some of the species and the ecosystems that we currently enjoy in this province will change considerably as a result of the warming of the climate and climatic changes. It's a possibility that parts of the boreal forest could actually be replaced by tree species from further south in Ontario. We need to start thinking about how those types of changes could impact the forestry industry

and the communities and families that depend on that industry. A warmer climate is already affecting patterns of insect and disease outbreak in our forests. The mountain pine beetle has already become a big problem for the forest industry in British Columbia. That's in part due to warmer winters, so not as many of the beetles are killed off in the winter season.

In addition to our forests, our water system is also something we're responsible for thinking about and developing policies and responses to. It too could be affected by climate change, including our fishery, both our commercial fishery, which is the largest in the world, and recreational boating and Great Lakes shipping.

The auditor's report, then, highlights the importance of our fish and wildlife program, and the impacts of climatic change are one of the significant things we're thinking about with respect to that program and everything we do as a ministry. The ministry strategy for dealing with climate change has three main goals. First, we want to get a better understanding of this worldwide phenomenon. Second, we want to figure out how we can mitigate those impacts. Third, we want to help Ontarians adapt by communicating the knowledge we have and having a greater understanding of how our policies and programs need to evolve to respond to those changes.

We're fortunate that our scientific staff in the ministry have been leaders in doing much of this research over the last number of years, and so I believe we're in a good position to significantly contribute to policy development and programming changes to allow us to respond to this critical agenda. I think our risk management in that regard is quite robust.

In the brief time I have left, let me speak specifically to some of the items that were in the Auditor General's report. First of all, on behalf of all the staff in the ministry and the senior management team, we do want to thank the Auditor General and his team for an in-depth review of the fish and wildlife program and the constructive recommendations that he did make. Thank you. We've accepted the report and are already making progress towards reacting to many of those recommendations. Let me briefly touch on eight specific items that he addressed.

First, species at risk and the Endangered Species Act: Ontario is home to more than 30,000 species in the province. It is that biodiversity which is so vital to our healthy ecosystem, and it is a healthy ecosystem which is also important to the biological, social and economic vitality of our province. At present, more than 180 species have been identified as being at risk, which means that they may disappear from Ontario if their rate of decline continues.

As I mentioned, the new Endangered Species Act, which will take effect in June, was a milestone achievement for the government, and it has set a North American standard for species-at-risk protection and recovery. With this new act, we'll triple the number of species and associated habitats that will be protected. Within five years it is our plan to have completed the

recovery strategies for all endangered species and threatened species which are currently identified. We'll accomplish this through greater involvement from landowners, resource users and conservation organizations. The government is backing this important stewardship approach with funding to the tune of \$18 million over four years to promote activities to protect essential habitat and green space.

The second item the auditor raised was invasive species. He recognized the devastating impact that invasive species can have on the province's native fish and wildlife populations, on the habitat and on our overall biodiversity. We agree that maintaining a healthy natural environment must include controlling the introduction and the spread of invasive species. That's why the government committed in last week's budget to allocate \$15 million over the next four years to establish a new invasive species research centre in Sault Ste. Marie. We'll be seeking support from the federal government to help develop that centre.

In recent years, invasive species have become an increasingly urgent issue here in the province of Ontario. I'm sure members are aware of the challenge of zebra mussels, purple loosestrife, gobies and many others. In the Great Lakes alone, there are more than 180 invasive species detected so far. We estimate there are probably two new species every year still coming into the Great Lakes. We know that the best way to control invasive species is to prevent their entry in the first place. Many aquatic invasives arrive in our Great Lakes through the ballast water of ocean-going vessels, so the ministry has spent a number of years working with the federal government and encouraging them to take action on ballast water. We're pleased to report that that effort has paid off. Transport Canada brought forth new regulations to require vessels to flush their tanks before entering the Great Lakes. The next critical step, however, is that we've got to get the Americans to adopt similar policies to prevent that ballast water from being discharged into our Great Lakes.

#### **1000**

Of course, once an invasive species arrives, we must do everything in our power to limit its spread. We've had good success in working with our partners, and I want to pay special thanks to the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters for helping us to promote and disseminate information about invasive species and spread information on the aggressive growth of a number of these species. Working with our partners, we want to remain vigilant in finding ways to close pathways so they can't spread, and raise more public awareness and eradicate, or at least contain wherever we can, the spread of these species, both on the land and in the water.

The third issue the Auditor General raised was bear management in the province. He recommended that we strengthen our efforts to gather reliable and accurate data. I want to emphasize that we in the ministry believe that our bear population is healthy and being maintained sustainably, but more information is always helpful. We

currently estimate the province has between 75,000 and 100,000 bears. It's actually one of the three largest bear populations on the continent. With our partner at Trent University, we have a DNA analysis system to substantiate and expand our knowledge of black bear populations. So we're continuing to gather new data on bear management. We've seen an increase in compliance with the mandatory harvest report that the auditor referred to for resident bear hunters. That came into effect in 2005 and it's been on a bit of a learning curve, but we're pleased to report progress in the compliance with that reporting.

To respond to the auditor's recommendations and ensure our management decisions are based on relevant and current science, we expect to begin consulting in the coming months with stakeholders and interested parties on a draft enhanced bear management framework. The Auditor General didn't make any recommendations or refer to the issue of nuisance bears. However, I'm assuming we may get into that during the question period.

The fourth item I'd like to touch on is the moose management program. The Auditor General expressed a similar concern regarding the need to gather reliable data about moose populations and the development and implementation of moose management policies for the province. We do have a sustainable moose population that supports a variety of uses: for viewing, tourists—in my previous portfolio, outdoor tourism was a growing sector—and other recreational activities, including our traditional culture of hunters, both residential and non-residential.

The fifth issue I'll touch on briefly—I'm conscious of my time—is the commercial fisheries and bycatch. In turning from the wildlife issues to fisheries, the auditor raised the issue of quota enforcement and bycatch policy. For those of you who may not be familiar with the term, "bycatch" refers to the incidental catch of species that weren't targeted by the fishery. Ontario has a well-regulated commercial fishery. Each licence holder is assigned a harvest quota. The data for fish harvesting is collected for the ministry by the Ontario Commercial Fisheries' Association through a joint management agreement, and this is monitored very closely by our MNR enforcement staff. The actual harvest was below or within 2% of the total allowable catch for each of the Great Lakes commercial fisheries for both 2006 and 2007. Fisheries managers tell us that bycatch is not threatening our fish sustainability. We will certainly continue to monitor this activity very closely.

There was a reference in the auditor's report to aboriginal fishing, so it's the sixth item I'd like to raise with you. The Auditor General expressed concern about some aspects of fishing in our aboriginal communities. We've made progress in framing this complex issue—the legal and policy issues of aboriginal rights—and commercial fishing is an issue we've been working on.

Our preferred approach is to work with First Nations communities to negotiate aboriginal communal fishing

licences. A communal fishing licence is working successfully in some areas already. We're continuing to make efforts to engage First Nations in discussions over fisheries and certainly we'll consider all options, including enforcement, if that becomes necessary.

The seventh issue that was raised in the auditor's report, and something that I know members have expressed concerns about, is compliance and enforcement. Compliance and enforcement are and will continue to be a core function of the Ministry of Natural Resources. We are continually looking at ways to improve our enforcement programs and ensure resource sustainability, as well as public safety. As part of the ministry's increase in the 2007-08 budget, the enforcement branch received approximately \$1.6 million of additional funding and we anticipate topping that up even further this year with the most recent announcements in the budget.

In 2006, members would be interested to know, the ministry undertook a new approach to enforcement operations, trying to target our enforcement activities in higher-risk areas, a risk management approach. This targeted enforcement means that conservation officers are continuing to ensure compliance with the law that regulates our natural resources, but with a stronger focus on the kinds of activities that will pose a greater risk to public safety and the ministry's mandate of sustaining our natural resources. The new approach emphasizes the important role for community outreach and public education. Our tips line is quite active. We're hopeful that all of these efforts are being quite successful in generating increased compliance across the province.

Finally, I'd like to address the auditor's recommendations on funding for the fish and wildlife program. I'm sure any deputy minister or minister who appears before this committee would always welcome additional funds for any program they're responsible for. That being said, I believe the ministry's fish and wildlife program is effective and consistently provides good value for money—the money we've been allocated—clearly demonstrated by the number of significant enhancements and achievements we've accomplished. As I said at the outset of our remarks, we try to adapt and respond to new knowledge, new information, new technology.

The new endangered species legislation was an additional \$18-million expenditure. We've invested more than \$15 million to upgrade the Dorian fish hatchery in Thunder Bay. We have a new Ontario biodiversity strategy that we're very proud of. We've established a new ecological framework for fisheries management that makes angling regulations easier to understand and improves our understanding of the state of the fisheries through better monitoring, and we are creating advisory councils to allow anglers to have more important and meaningful input into the management of the resource.

We've developed a provincial conservation strategy for wolves, and the bear wise program has proven to be quite successful. We're also quite proud of the work we've done with our partners in re-establishing Atlantic salmon in Lake Ontario. So far, we've stocked more than

700,000 young salmon into the tributaries of Lake Ontario. It might interest members to know that we actually discovered an adult female Atlantic salmon migrating upstream to spawn in the Credit River just last year, so that bodes well for the future of this species.

That's just a partial list of some of the activities and work we've been doing in the fish and wildlife program, building on our record of achievement in the past, and continuing to adapt to new knowledge and new information. We want to continue to deliver on our mandate on behalf of the government.

I've talked a lot about the Ministry of Natural Resources making a difference in influencing our lives and the economy and society. I've highlighted some of the achievements we've accomplished with the resources we've been allocated and I've touched on some of the specific recommendations in the auditor's report.

So with that, I'll conclude and look forward to a dialogue.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Thank you very much. Ms. Sandals.

1010

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** Yes, thank you. One of the concerns that the auditor raised in his comments was around the moose population, and in some areas whether there were more tags than were sustainable. I wondered if you had any comments on how you measure that, and the different terminologies, and if you could help us sort out what's really going there.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** The moose is probably the most intensely monitored and managed wildlife species we have in the province. There's a lot of interest in it. So your question is a very good one. We have a robust system and I'm going to ask Kevin to give us some of the technical details in a minute, but I would like to begin with a couple of comments.

The challenge we face with managing the moose population—I've only been at this for a couple of months, but I think I've figured it out. We have approximately 100,000 moose in the province and we have approximately 100,000 moose hunters in the province.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** They can't all hunt.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** If everybody got a tag in the same year and everybody was successful, we'd have one year of moose hunting. So that's the 40,000-foot layman's understanding of why we have to have such a robust and detailed management of our moose population.

I would say that in our surveys this year, we've actually been quite successful. The moose survey work happens in the wintertime when the snow is on the ground and you can see the animals. We've successfully done surveys in about 20 of our moose management areas. We're adding more data and we're analyzing that data right now. I cannot off the top of my head give you all the complex responses to the definitions, but I know that Kevin has explained it to me several times and he'd be glad to explain it to you now.

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** My name is Kevin Wilson. I'm the ADM for natural resource management division, and before I touch on the issue of some of the definitions that were referenced in terms that the auditor's report spoke to, maybe a couple of other observations.

Some very good, helpful recommendations from the Auditor General. We have undertaken a review of our existing moose policy that's going forward this year in a fairly comprehensive way. We felt that it's timely for us to look at updating the overarching policy framework that we use to manage moose in the province. An element of that, which will be undertaken next year, will start to look at the model that Ontario uses for allocation of moose, for the issuance of licences.

There are several definitions that are referenced in the Auditor General's report and those revolve around quota, population targets, estimated populations and huntable populations. To begin, over a long period of time, the ministry has been establishing population targets which are essentially long-term goals for the management of the moose herd for the province, and then individually for geographic areas called wildlife management units. There are observations made in the Auditor General's report that some of these population targets weren't being met. We certainly agree with that and we feel that it is timely for us to come back and start to look at those population targets, to determine whether they are current and reflective of things like existing climatic conditions and whether they need to be updated in some places and modified.

A second thing that we do is actually undertake a calculation of the estimated population of moose. This is a conservative number that is reflective only of the moose that are actually seen and visibly identified through things like aerial inventories that the deputy has spoken about.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** If I may interrupt, the estimated population then is just what you've seen. That isn't the actual population?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** That is correct. It is a conservative number and we use it not for the purpose of setting tag quotas for hunting purposes, but to help us manage the moose as a species over the long term, and it would be useful in helping us set population targets.

The third term that's referenced in the report is that of the huntable population. The huntable population is actually a combination of moose that are visibly identified through aerial inventories, but also where our biologists have a high degree of confidence that there are other moose present. We can have that confidence because through these aerial inventories we're tracking moose through the bush, we may see tracks of individual moose or several moose, but you might not actually see the moose as you're carrying out the aerial inventory. But we're confident that the huntable population numbers are conservatively based and that they can be used as the basis of determining quota allocation in the issuance of tags for individual wildlife management units.

Generally speaking, you'll find that the figures that we use for the huntable population are actually higher than the figures for the estimated population because there's a more conservative allowance in the determination of the estimated population.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** But that's basically a reflection of the estimated population—the ones you actually saw when you did a survey.

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** That is correct.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** And the huntable population is what you know about the proportion of what you saw relative to what's out there—other things that people have observed on the ground.

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** That is correct. A lot of the information does come from these aerial inventories, where we may track a certain number of moose and have visual sightings of moose. We may have confidence, based on other tracks we see, that there is a higher number and we'll do a calculation as to what we think that number is.

I think the other thing that's important to know is that these numbers are certainly not static when it comes to issuing hunting tags. We are looking at information and adjusting on a year-by-year basis for the quota that we have for each wildlife management unit. We are looking at a range of information to help us make conservative decisions around quota allocation so that we can sustain the population of the moose over time.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** I don't know moose, because I don't have moose hanging out near where I live. I do have deer hanging out. A winter like this winter is really, really tough because the snow was so deep when you get farther north. Do you have the same effect with moose—that you also have to take the climate or the weather into account?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** We certainly do. You'd look at climatic conditions. We believe climate change is having an impact on the moose population because it's leading to an overlap of the white-tailed deer population with moose, and then that brings increased competition. It introduces other disease that deer carry that moose are susceptible to, and increased deer populations also bring increased numbers of predators, like wolves, which will also prey on moose. So we do look at climatic conditions—climate change on the one hand, and then severe winter conditions on the other—which can have a substantive impact on both moose and deer.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** Do I have time for one more?

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Sure.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** The other thing I wanted to ask you about was the Endangered Species Act, because I think at the time that the Auditor General was working on the report, the new legislation was just coming in. I'm wondering if you have any sort of an update on what's happened with the Endangered Species Act, in terms of implementation, since the Auditor General was in the ministry?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** Certainly, the recommendations of the Auditor General were very timely. They high-

lighted what was an ongoing issue in Ontario: our ability to complete recovery strategies for endangered species in a timely fashion. At the time that the review was under way, we were in the process of a major policy review of the endangered species program in Ontario.

We're very pleased that the Legislature had the time to consider and then pass the Endangered Species Act, 2007. This is part of an overall program enhancement for dealing with endangered species.

I'm going to begin by characterizing this very much as a stewardship-first focus. It is very much looking at when, where and how we can work with landowners and farmers and resource users like the forest industry, the water power industry, NGOs, to manage for better outcomes for endangered species.

As our deputy has said, there are now over 180 species that are endangered in the province—endangered, threatened, of special concern or extirpated—and we are wanting to ensure that the model we have in Ontario is a world-class model. We borrowed heavily from the experience of other jurisdictions, looked at the federal application of their legislation and came up with the model that was introduced in the Legislature last fall.

I think one needs to compare the model of ESA, 2007, against the preceding legislation. There is a substantive difference. The substantive difference is in the level of protection that's afforded endangered species. The old act, robust in its time, was outdated; passed in the early 1970s, it only offered protection for endangered species and didn't afford protection to other classifications of species of special concern or threatened species. Another fundamental flaw with the existing legislation was that it lacked any capacity for applying flexibility in a way that could support socio-economic benefits for the citizens of the province while at the same time supporting the protection and recovery of these species.

#### 1020

We're very pleased with this new model. The act is predicated on several key features. Where, in the past, individuals might have heard only at the moment that a species was to be regulated, that it was coming on the endangered species list, there is now a requirement—and this is a significant change—for our science body, COSSARO, to provide an advance notice of 60 days that they're going to begin to look at a species and assess it for the purpose of the act.

COSSARO ordinarily takes about a year to complete its assessment of the species. Then, following the report of COSSARO to our minister, the minister is then in a position to provide for automatic listing of that species. That automatic listing is predicated on the pure science information about whether that species is endangered, threatened or of special concern.

The act does require that we would provide a 60-day EBR notice for posting of the species lists and then a further 90 days for us to formulate the automatic regulation. The good news is that we're moving down the road of automatic listing and automatic protection of significant habitat for these species. At the same time that

that's happening, we're advising the public that the species is under consideration. So it's giving time for those resource users and landowners out there to recognize that the protection may be coming, and for them to sit down with our ministry and to think and look at when, where and how we can mitigate the impact on the species of different kinds of use of land that we're engaged in.

To assist with that, the act established a new advisory committee for the minister, whose acronym is SARPAC. It's the intention to have a broad range of representation on this committee, and this committee would then provide advice to the minister and to her officials on when, where and how we could look at the use of stewardship dollars, which our deputy has spoken about; incentive programs that we're in the business of establishing at this point; and where we can begin to look at using appropriate flexibility instruments. These could range from the use of agreements in section 16 of the act, of permits for different purposes in section 17 or, in exceptional cases, in section 55, the use of regulation instruments that are embedded in the act.

The intent of the act, of the model, is to ensure that we are providing more robust protection and more support for recovery of the species, while at the same time we're building in these flexibility instruments to balance off socio-economic considerations. The Auditor General raised concerns about the timeliness with which we are now completing recovery strategies and identified that that was key to ensuring we were getting to the outcomes that the province was seeking.

The act does build in specified time periods for us to complete both recovery strategies and in the preparation of regulations for habitat protection. Of the number of species that were previously identified, both in the report and in our comments today, within five years, we will have their habitat regulations completed. We are actually looking at key species in the first year, woodland caribou being one, where we intend to have the habitat regulation in place for that species by June 30, 2009. Then we'll be looking at that list of additional species and, over that five-year period, mapping out plans for how we're going to ensure the completion of recovery strategies and habitat regulations for each of those species identified, and then, of course, for new species that come on the list, as they're identified by the science body COSSARO.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** Thank you very much.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** There are a couple of questions that I have arising out of the ones already asked. I guess I'll ask the most recent ones first, just for continuity's sake: In your remarks around the species-at-risk strategy, the indication in the report was that there are 120 recovery strategies at various stages, and I think you just said that you had hoped they would all be done by the end of five years. Did I hear that right? I think currently there are 42 in place. Do you have a list of which 42 species those apply to?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** We do, and we can certainly make it available to the committee.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Can I have that then, Mr. Chairman, please? Thank you.

Going from that, there's concern around golden eagles and how many golden eagles are left in Ontario. My understanding is that there isn't a recovery strategy in place at this point—and you can certainly correct me if I'm wrong. Is there a recovery strategy for golden eagles at this point in time, and if there is, can it be tabled?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** I'm going to confer with my staff. I don't believe we have completed the recovery strategy for the golden eagle at this point. That is certainly a species we are concerned about, given the numbers that have been identified within the province, but I can confirm the status later on in the proceedings this morning.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** So it's in process?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** That's correct. We are focusing on a very massive cleanup job of what we characterize as the backlog of species whose recovery strategies are outstanding.

In addition to the stewardship dollars that the deputy has spoken of, the ministry did receive additional dollars to its base allocation, much of which is now being focused on the completion of those recovery strategies and in the preparation of the habitat regulations specific to those species.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** How much would have been invested thus far in the golden eagle strategy? Would you have a figure?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** I wouldn't have that figure handy, but I could certainly obtain it for you.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Can I make sure we get that, Mr. Chairman, please? That's great. Thanks.

Considering the significant backlog and the fact that it's a five-year plan, is there an opportunity to review or to table the 120 species and what stage of development the recovery plans are at, at this point?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** We could certainly provide information to that effect. As I have indicated, we've identified—and the previous minister had announced, I believe, in the Legislature—10 signature species that we felt were important enough that we wanted to move ahead with, woodland caribou being one.

We are taking a look at the remaining listed species in the backlog and we are attempting to prioritize those species, based on issues of their vulnerability and the availability of scientific information, to assist us in the preparation of recovery strategies. With that information—we haven't completed it yet—we are coming forward with, in effect, a type of schedule that's looking at the completion of these recovery strategies over the balance of the five-year period from proclamation of the act.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Excellent. That's good. I know there have been new resources provided, but how much would have been spent in 2007 on endangered species recovery strategies?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** We received just over \$4 million to the ministry's base allocation for endangered species and we'd have to look at the actuals when those numbers

were rolled up at the end of our fiscal year. I'm not sure that those are available just yet.

There were additional dollars, I think just over \$6 million, for the ministry's base budget for the endangered species program. Much of that is being focused on the implementation requirements for the new act, which would include regulations that will need to be in place either on or after June 30 for the act's introduction, and then of course, as I have spoken about, all the work associated with recovery strategy activities and in the preparation of regulations for habitat protection.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Would it be fair to say that the bulk was spent on the implementation of the new act as opposed to the recovery strategies?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** I understand the question. I don't have that breakdown and that's something that I think we'd have to take a look at, about exactly how the initial investment was spent.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** If we could get an understanding of that, it would be helpful, Mr. Chairman.

One of the things that Ms. Sandals mentioned as well in this whole field—and you remarked on it—is the partnerships that are required to make this successful over the ongoing implementation. I'm wondering if the species-at-risk stewardship fund—I think there was about \$3 million allocated. Is that right?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** That was for the past fiscal year. The number increases to \$5 million for this fiscal year.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Okay, great. How much of the initial investment or the initial allocation has been spent?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** We actually got the funding in the fiscal year during the act's passage by the Legislature. So we moved ahead in the summer and developed a set of criteria to guide the application process. We received many applications to the fund. I believe we spent in the neighbourhood of \$2.3 million or \$2.7 million out of the stewardship fund in the first year.

### 1030

We have already gone out with our request for proposals for the 2008-09 year, and at this point in time we're oversubscribed. We've got just over \$10 million in proposed stewardship projects for the \$5 million available and we're going through the criteria to assess those projects. We're hopeful that we can make some decisions shortly around which ones we can commence in the 2008-09 fiscal year.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I guess that's a good thing. People want to be involved; that's excellent. I'm just wondering then, is there an opportunity for you to table the people who received funds in the last batch?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** Yes, we certainly can. I believe that was part of a public announcement in August 2007 as well.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** That's very good. Thanks very much.

Going back to some of the other issues that were raised, so that I'm not all over the map, on the moose tag issue, my colleague from Timmins—James Bay, Gilles Bisson—he had initially promised to sub for me on this

committee today because I'm not feeling good—and I had a chat about the moose tag system. I just have a couple of questions about that. Again, I'm just recalling our conversation.

I know that you indicated in your remarks, Deputy Minister, that there's currently a new framework being developed, and I think you said that next year—oh, I think it was Kevin who was saying that—the licence allocation model is up for an overhaul. You're putting in a public consultation process for that overhaul?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** That's correct.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Let me, if I could, Ms. Horwath, acknowledge the input of Mr. Bisson. He submitted a report to the then-minister in April of last year which staff have been going through. It's part of the input and it's been very much appreciated. Our minister has asked us to engage stakeholders and the public in a broad consultation, and Mr. Bisson's report is actually part of the work that we're using. So please convey our thanks to him for that.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** That's excellent. I appreciate that. He did mention to me whether there's a possibility of looking at issuing tags by family or hunting unit, because it's really a random lottery. Some people can be in that lottery for years and years and never actually win, and yet others are able to get the tags consistently, year over year. He specifically asked me whether you see any possibility that that might be one of the opportunities. The issue is that everybody in the whole family—moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas, uncles and aunts and cousins—puts it in, in hopes that somebody's going to get one. Is there a way of looking at the family unit as opposed to individuals?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** I'll certainly let Kevin speak to the details, but we've got no opposition to looking at all models and all options. It would be part of a broad public consultation. We've also had some suggestions that we look at more of the Quebec approach. Everything's certainly on the table and we're willing to look at it.

I go back to the high-level challenge we have, and that is, no matter what we end up with, there are still 100,000 moose and 100,000 hunters, so we're going to have pressure no matter what system we use. On the principles of fairness and distribution, some balance for people who live in the north is something that's been talked about. We would certainly want to consider all of those things, but no matter what system we use, it's not going to make the moose population grow. We've got a limited resource that we've got to manage.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Okay, thank you. Do I still have some time?

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Yes, a couple of minutes.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** You talk about the 40,000 feet—that was my next question—around the aerial surveys of moose. One of the things that was mentioned was that there's a high degree of confidence, and that the numbers that were used are fairly conservative, yet we have the situation outlined in the report where more tags

were handed out than the moose population that existed. Is that right?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** There was a media report which commented on the Auditor General's findings that I'd say mischaracterized the Auditor General's findings. It was a CP wire services report that seemed to indicate that there were more hunting tags being issued than there were actually moose in wildlife management units. That was not correct. We do base decisions on the number of tags in each unit and on the huntable population, which I've mentioned is the number of moose we actually visually identify through aerial inventories, but also ones where we're confident that there are more moose there based on numbers of tracks that are identified through the aerial survey process.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** You have, I think in response to the report, indicated that you've done 20—I think that was in your remarks as well—aerial surveys recently. Not including that batch, let's say, what would be the average number of aerial surveys being done in, let's say, the last five years, year over year?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** It does go up and down, and it's very weather dependent. We were quite fortunate this year. We planned for a significant number, as we usually do, and we got close to ideal weather conditions for most of the ones that we wanted to conduct. If you end up with poor weather conditions, either not enough snow cover—in some years we've had that—or weather conditions that make aerial inventory flights dangerous, it does have an impact on our ability to carry out these types of surveys.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Right. But you have the records of how many per year and all of that that might be made available?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** We would in terms of actual numbers that we've conducted year over year.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** All right. If we could get that information that would be very helpful.

I'm just wondering about the total amount that would be spent on aerial surveys, let's just say in core moose ranges in each year of the last five years—the correlation of costs versus the numbers. Would you have that as well?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** We wouldn't have that just off the top, but that's something we could go back and look at.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** That would be great if you could provide that. I think that's it on the moose tag issues.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Okay. Mr. Yakabuski?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Thank you for joining us today, gentlemen. I have a couple of questions right off the top on your address because there are a couple of things that caught my attention, but I wasn't able to catch them all. I believe we don't have a written copy of that, but I think you mentioned something to the effect that the ministry was purchasing 305 new vehicles this year. How many of those vehicles would be dedicated to fish and wildlife?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** We can get the breakdown of that for you.

**Mr. David Lynch:** Actually, if I may—I'm David Lynch, the CAO. We've just purchased the 305 vehicles, and in broad terms they'll go largely all across the province to our operational units and the like. They'll be part of what our districts do every day, our science people and the like. I can't really come back specifically to say on fish and wildlife.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I'm just curious because this section of the auditor's report is dealing with fish and wildlife.

**Mr. David Lynch:** Right. Like I said, it's difficult to answer that way, but I know that in one of our head offices, which is Peterborough, we're getting seven vehicles out of the 305. The 305 are aimed at our legacy vehicles, which by definition are greater than 10 years old. We're glad to say that our 17- to 22-year-old vehicles will now be jettisoned because of this. Many of those were in the parks program because a beater can beetle around a park.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** It's not necessarily that these are going to be vehicles added to the fleet. Most of them are replacement, so really we got newer vehicles but we don't have more vehicles.

**Mr. David Lynch:** That's right. We can come back with a breakdown around the 305.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** If you could find out how many are dedicated to fish and wildlife out of this new number, I'd appreciate that. I think that would be good information.

Another thing you mentioned in the report was your species at risk. You talked about 180 species being identified as being at risk. You talked about the broad mandate that you have. You also gave us the map of Ontario over the map of Europe to show just how big an area this is.

The money you're talking about is \$18 million over four years, so \$4.5 million a year for the next four years to deal with species at risk in the province of Ontario, which is almost as big as half of Europe; it's quite large. I want to put that into perspective: for example, \$8 million over the next two years for the former Minister of Finance, now the member for Vaughan, to travel around, coming up with some new ideas about tourism; \$9 million to deal with species at risk in the entire province of Ontario. I would suggest (a) that's a pretty meagre coat of wax, and (b), is that money going to have anything to do with the special purposes account with regard to fish and wildlife?

**1040**

**Mr. David Lindsay:** There are a couple of good comments nested in that question, Mr. Yakabuski. Let me begin by repeating a phrase I used in my comments. It would be passing strange for a deputy minister or a minister to say that they wouldn't welcome more money, so I won't use that phrase.

Nevertheless, the species at risk, as Kevin said, is going to work based on partnerships and based on

working with those across the province who are passionate about this issue and have a particular interest in it.

Let me give you one example: The eastern blue racer is a species of snake which is quite rare and its habitat is under considerable stress and threat. Pelee Island is its location. It was a species that was particularly identified in the Species at Risk Act. The Ontario branch of the Nature Conservancy of Canada has been acquiring some land—they do private sector fundraising—and, working with the aggregate resource extractor in that community, he changed his resource extraction practices. Working with the Nature Conservancy and working with MNR, we've been able to expand the acceptable habitat for the blue racer snake. So it's not just government money, but it's partnerships with landowners and not-for-profit organizations.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Would you have an estimate of how much money—outside of the ministry—from the stakeholders, landowners and interested parties is also being dedicated to assist in the—

**Mr. David Lindsay:** I don't have that off the top of my head, but we could start building those kinds of numbers for you.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** That would be an interesting thing. Again, is this \$4.5 million a year affecting the special purposes account? Is that money coming from it?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** It's not money coming from the special purposes account.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** It's not.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** No, it's money coming from the general revenue of the province.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** The general revenue of the province, but out of the Ministry of Natural Resource's budget, obviously.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** I would take it from other budgets if they would permit me to, but, no, it does have to come from our budget.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I don't know if you mentioned in your initial address that there were additional monies in the budget for the Ministry of Natural Resources, or there were increases. I heard the word "increases," and unfortunately, my mind was elsewhere, which sometimes it is, and I didn't catch all of the details. But certainly according to the budget documents, we see reductions in the overall budget of the—

**Mr. David Lindsay:** We can give you a technical explanation for why those numbers appear as they do, but the bottom line is we have \$780 million this year, which is a \$55-million increase year over year from our operating. Because of accounting transactions and the way it's reported—estimates to actual—it may appear like a reduction in the printed budget document, but we are planning on spending \$55 million more this year. My performance bonus depends on balancing my own budget, so I don't plan on spending money they're not giving me.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Good point. On that \$55 million, you're talking about \$15 million over four years for an invasive species—

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Centre.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** —centre in Sault Ste. Marie. That's more of a terrestrial invasive species, as opposed to aquatic?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** All.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** It's all?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Yes.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Will any of that money come out of the special purposes account?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** No.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** None again.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** No. It's capital allocation that came from the consolidated revenue account of the government of Ontario.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** And \$25 million—and I don't know if you talked about it—for an invasive species centre in Windsor, I believe? No, somewhere else.

**Mr. David Lynch:** The deputy referred to the Dorion fish culture.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** That Dorion fish hatchery. I think that's \$15 million.

**Mr. David Lynch:** Yes.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Isn't there another situation where there's \$25 million being—

**Mr. David Lindsay:** There's a new products forestry research institute that we're working on in the forestry branch, in Thunder Bay, dealing with our colleagues from—

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Okay, bioeconomy.

**Mr. David Lynch:** Bioeconomy; that's the \$25-million figure I think you're referring to.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** It's not fish and wildlife, then?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** No, that's dealing with research and innovation in the forestry sector.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** So obviously it's not coming out of that special purpose account.

What I'm getting to is the disagreement you have between anglers and hunters in this province and the ministry as to what are appropriate allocations of money from the special purposes account. There are differences of opinion as to what constitutes fair spending out of that account.

Their position is that there's about a \$30-million gap in what is actually spent on fish and wildlife programs, according to their definitions, versus that of the ministry. Is there any ongoing work being done to consult with these groups as to what, in fairness, constitutes genuine fish and wildlife programs as opposed to some of the things that the auditor has also identified, which could fall into that grey area?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Again, an excellent question. The relationship between our good friends at the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and the ministry is long-standing and robust. The heritage of fishing and hunting is something that's long been understood and supported by the ministry and by the government. We

want to continue to maintain that open dialogue. I think definitions on what some expenditures would constitute as fish and game, versus fish and wildlife, will be ongoing. But we spend more money on fish and wildlife in the province of Ontario than is collected from the special purpose account.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** According to the ministry's definition?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Yes.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I think that's the clarification and that's the issue: in whose opinion? What you describe as money for fish and wildlife, or fish and game, may not constitute the same definition that someone else agrees with. I think that's the issue here.

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** I'm Charlie Lauer, the ADM for field services division. Part of your question was, "Is there any consultation with the OFAH?" My colleague Dave Lynch and myself meet quite regularly with the senior officials from the OFAH and go through with them in great detail current allocations, where money is being spent, and get input from them. Those sorts of discussions occur on a regular basis. So is there consultation with that group? Certainly there is.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** There's also a disagreement.

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** There's debate.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Okay.

**Mr. David Lynch:** If I may, just further to Charlie's comment, following the budget last week, I phoned Mike Reader at, whatever, 10 o'clock at night to say we met last year and let's meet later this week to go over the aggregate breakdown of what's happened here. We did that last week and we've said to Mike, "Really, where you're interested, Mike, is after we take the \$55 million and we allocate it over the next month or so, into early May, into the ministry, and let's dialogue then, when we're ready for specifics that might be of interest to you." That's just an example of the ongoing dialogue.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** The special purposes account was established prior to the bear wise program. Can you confirm that any of that funding comes out of the special purposes account?

**Mr. David Lynch:** No, bear wise is part of the ministry's contribution, which we expect in our printed estimates. We're just closing the books for the last week. Our CRF, our ministry contribution, will be \$19.6 million, which is what we're expecting to see when we confirm the printed estimates next week.

1050

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** In contribution to the fund?

**Mr. David Lynch:** To fish and wildlife program. As the deputy said, the SPA, we're expecting about \$62.7 million or so—\$19.6 million from the ministry there.

In addition to that, what doesn't show in estimates is the federal-provincial agreement on OCOA for projects that would relate to fish and wildlife. The ministry tops up the enforcement program. Last year, about 50% of funding for enforcement came out of our general monies, which shows out of the field services budget line, so that would be another piece in addition to that, and then there

are other things because, as the deputy says, it's integrated resource management. Even part of our forest management planning includes data collection for species impacts and the like. There are a number of other pieces, but when printed estimates come next week, you'll see just short of \$20 million from the ministry.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** How does that compare, Mr. Lynch, with—CRF, you called it, the ministry's contribution?

**Mr. David Lynch:** Well, yes.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** How does that \$19.6 million compare to the contribution prior to the bear wise program? What I'm saying is, has that increased by a corresponding amount of the cost of operating the bear wise program? You could tell us the cost of operating the bear wise program and the amount that the fund has increased as a result of that, so that people can also do their own math with regard to those figures.

**Mr. David Lynch:** There are a number of factors in what gets spent in fish and wildlife. First off, the SPA revenues basically go on a three-year cycle. People generally buy three-year outdoor cards etc. So we have a peak year that generally is in excess of \$70 million, and then our other two years we're mid-\$55 million in general terms. So as we allocate monies, we have to catch those high years to keep a steady state, and that sees our contributions go up and down.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** So, in the last three years, what would those contributions have been?

**Mr. David Lynch:** In 2005-06, we're talking \$17 million from the ministry; last year, \$14.7 million; and then what we expect to release next week, just short of \$20 million.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** So we could be looking at a cyclical change or we could be looking at money as a result of the bear wise program. If we went to the three years previous, would it be the same pattern? I guess three years ago we didn't have a bear wise program.

**Mr. David Lynch:** Yes, right. Bear wise kicks in in 2004-05. If we look at the previous year to that, actually \$12.9 million from the ministry, and then when bear wise kicks in, we go up all the way to \$21.7 million. So the \$5-million-odd that bear wise kicks in—it is obviously well above that. It's about a \$9-million increase, and \$5 million for bear wise would be part of that.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** So you're saying, then, that the bear wise program is entirely funded by additional contributions and not monies from the special purposes account?

**Mr. David Lynch:** That's correct.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I appreciate that. Thank you very much. I don't know if I've got any more time or not.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** No, you don't.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Can you say that in a nicer way?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Mr. Chairman, we have some responses to earlier questions. Would you like to save those until the end, or when would you like us to—

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Yes, we'll do those at the end, if we could. I have Ms. Van Bommel.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** Thank you for being here this morning. In my riding in southwestern Ontario, and I would imagine throughout—I know throughout southern Ontario—the deer population has certainly increased. One of the reasons is because deer like to eat farm crops. As a farmer myself and with a constituency that is predominantly agriculture, what is MNR doing to assist farmers or help them to deal with the damage that's being done to the crops? Certainly one of the reasons we have so many deer is because there's lots of food, but it's not coming from the wild areas but from farm crops.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Again, I'm going to let Kevin go into the details of all the work we've been doing, but this is an example of an issue that the Ministry of Natural Resources deals with on a daily basis. There are lots of challenges. It's not just in your part of the province, but many other parts of the province. Human-deer interaction is becoming a bit of a challenge.

In some of the more rural parts of the GTA, mayors have also expressed concern, and we've been working with them on changing some firearms policies to allow for greater hunting opportunities in those parts of the province.

In preparing for today's conversation, I was surprised to learn that the deer hunt has actually doubled over the last decade. So there are a lot of policy changes that happen year over year to try to address and accommodate the challenges of deer. Kevin and his team are doing some additional work and additional reviews.

We're working with the Ministry of Transportation on how it's impacting on our roads. We're also working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. So it's not just the Ministry of Natural Resources. There's a number of ministries that are working on this together, because deer-human interface is not just in rural communities, it's on our highways. I saw one in the Don Valley just a couple of weeks ago. So all of those people who are parked on the Don Valley can do some deer viewing in the early spring.

I'll turn it over to Kevin.

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** It's certainly correct that the deer population has increased substantially. One only has to go back to the 1980s to recall how infrequently you might actually see a deer in a rural setting, let alone in an urban setting. The fact that the population has recovered to the extent that it has is actually a reflection of the improving strength of biodiversity in the province. We're now managing maybe too much of a good thing that's been happening.

As the deputy has pointed out, this is happening for several reasons. Ontario's not unique, as a jurisdiction, in dealing with this problem. We work very closely with wildlife departments across the Great Lakes in the US, and similar circumstances are arising there. We've had far more favourable habitat conditions. We've had a series of milder winters, with this one winter probably being an exception in terms of snow load. As a result,

there's increased food availability, which is leading to higher reproduction rates among deer and a booming deer population. We have been working with a broad range of stakeholders—the farm community, land-owners' organizations, as well as other ministries—as we've tried to tackle this problem.

There are several tools that are currently available. Of course, one tool—not the only one—is using hunting as an effective method of controlling population, so we have undertaken efforts to expand recreational hunting opportunities through lengthening seasons. In the last couple of years, we actually have provided the flexibility for municipalities to opt into Sunday gun hunting as one means of providing additional deer hunting opportunities to help reduce the population.

There are a range of other solutions that are there apart from hunting. In working with other stakeholder organizations, we've developed a draft human-wildlife conflict strategy that is intended to look at a range of solutions that can be provided. We're hopeful that that strategy is going to be approved shortly. That will then see us pick up and engage in further dialogue with these various stakeholder groups.

As the deputy has said, it could range from working with the Ministry of Transportation around highway design so that you've got clearer setbacks from highways of vegetation—that's removing the food source for deer that's close to a highway and removing the potential for deer to then cross the highway and result in unfortunate accidents for people who are using highways.

For farmers, it could mean different approaches to managing. An example is different styles of fencing to keep out deer and other species that might be causing crop damage. We are, of course, working with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs around their existing programs and policies that deal with damage that farmers suffer: either crop damage from deer or predation from certain species, as it would affect sheep or cattle.

The ministry has been making available an existing tool for farmers: deer removal authorization certificates. They're there for farmers, and farmers can then allow agents to come onto their property and cull the deer if there's damage to crops that's occurring.

**1100**

As I've said, we have been sitting on this committee with a wide range of stakeholders—which includes both the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters at one end and wildlife management organizations and conservation organizations at the other end—as we start to develop the broadest spectrum of tools that we can start to employ at a community level in responding to this issue.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** I just want to take that one step further. We were talking about the snow cover. I have Pinery Park in my riding—a beautiful park, absolutely beautiful—and they have a number of at-risk and endangered species in terms of plant life. Over the years, one of the issues has always been the impact of the deer, as they're grazing and trying to survive a winter, especially what they're doing to the trees and also to the

plant life. So how does MNR manage the deer population within the jurisdictions that you have, such as provincial parks?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** Carefully. We recognize that there is a problem, as you end up with a large number of deer in a provincial park also causing damage to sensitive environments, habitats and species. From time to time, where circumstances warrant, we actually, through park planning processes, look at using different techniques and tools to respond to those challenges. In the case of deer, we've actually undertaken deer culling programs in various parks like the Pinery—Presqu'île Park would be another example—as we work to manage the population to more sustainable levels that are less damaging to the rest of the environment and to other species that inhabit those provincial parks and conservation reserves.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** Are there specific times of year that you do the cull? And how do you go about doing the cull?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** We actually spend a fair amount of time partnering with First Nations organizations to work with us in carrying out the cull. Obviously, for public safety reasons, we want to be careful that we're not engaging in a cull during the operating season of a park. If citizens are going to go and enjoy the Pinery Park or Presqu'île, we don't want them to be bothered by, or at risk of, hunters coming through culling deer. So generally speaking, these culls are taking place outside of the operating season for the park. We do pay very close attention to public safety issues in relation to neighbouring properties adjacent to parks to ensure that we are absolutely minimizing the risk that's presented by these kinds of operations.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Mr. Craitor.

**Mr. Kim Craitor:** Before I ask my question, I want to put something on the record. It's, what, my fifth year as an MPP, and I want to thank the front-line workers. I have Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake, and there have been so many times—with Friends of Fort Erie's Creeks, the Stevensville conservation centre or the Niagara Falls nature centre—where I've had to ask questions. I just want to say that the front-line staff who I deal with, in particular, are just fabulous people. The really neat thing about talking to them is that they'll tell you if they feel that the government should make some changes, and they do it in a very positive way. It's nice to hear their perspective, because they're right there on the front lines. So I just want to put that on the record to say thanks.

I did have one question, and it's probably a little bit related to our situation in Niagara-on-the-Lake. We have the gypsy moth—I think you're familiar with it, and again, the Ministry of Natural Resources has been very kind to us. It looks like we're going to have some solutions in spraying the area and dealing with that. That brings me to the question I wanted to ask you about invasive species. The gypsy moth, to us, is an invasive species. It is going to cause huge amounts of damage, but I think we're going to be able to get a handle on that.

I just wondered what the ministry is doing to protect Ontario's native species and how you're going to deal with that. I know there's been some discussion, so maybe you could just elaborate on that for me.

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** I'll be glad to. First, thank you very much for the comments to the staff. We'll make sure we convey those to them. We have a very large staff, as I talked about in my opening comments—long-serving, dedicated and very professional. I hope I can convey or channel their enthusiasm to this committee through our comments and interventions today. I certainly can't channel all of their knowledge and experience, but I'd like to be able to convey their enthusiasm, because they're just terrific. My colleagues have much more experience on the ground and can speak to the issues, but the passion is something that you can't articulate enough. It really is genuine. So thank you for that. We'll convey your comments back.

With respect to invasive species, it is a priority of the government and a priority of the ministry, not just for the economic impact that it has in the forestry sector, for example, but also the impact it has on the ecosystems. All of us who are familiar with the Great Lakes know the difference that zebra mussels have made to our Great Lakes system. That impacts the trout and the salmon. The deeper you can see down into the water, the more challenging it becomes for the feeding of the salmon fishery. Zebra mussels in the water or purple loosestrife on the land have larger, more significant impacts on a dynamic ecosystem than the average citizen might realize. So we in the Ministry of Natural Resources take it very seriously.

Again, I commented in my opening remarks that we can't do this alone. In speaking to Mr. Yakabuski's question about where we're getting help with endangered species, we need to work with our partners. The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters have been incredibly helpful to us in explaining to their members the importance of cleaning their boats to stop the spread and making sure they're not transferring bait from one lake or river system to another.

I would reiterate that we still have a challenge with the United States regulatory regime with respect to the discharge of ballast from ships. If they would simply take out the fresh water ballast and purge it with salt water before they enter the Great Lakes system, that would go a long way toward preventing the introduction of invasive species.

I'm not sure what else I can share with you. Again, I can speak to the passion; I still need a little time to work on the technical details. But it's something we recognize, not just on the land but in the water, that has a huge impact to the system, to our economy and to the enjoyment of our natural resources.

**Mr. Kim Craitor:** I'm an MPP along the border so, in my situation, we meet pretty regularly. I meet with my American counterparts, whether they're congressmen or state legislators. In fact, I'm going over the border

tonight to the bi-national conference that's taking place, so I'll have a chance again to meet with them.

I'm just wondering if maybe we can be of some assistance. For some of us who are along the border and have regular meetings with them, maybe you could send us some of that information. Then when I'm speaking to them or I'm calling them, saying, "Do you realize that we need your help on this? Here's what we've done. Can you be a little more forceful on the US side, to ensure you have the same kind of regulations as we do?"—again, sort of like the front-line worker. Maybe we can be of some assistance. I deal with them all the time, particularly because we've got the passport issue and a whole list of issues along the border. It's strange; we're talking a lot more than we ever did in the past, but in a positive way. So I'm just offering that for some of us who are along the border, who deal with the Americans all the time.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Thank you very much for the offer. We'll make sure we get more information to you. But, seeing as we have a captive audience here and many apostles who maybe could help us, I'm going to ask Kevin to give you 30 seconds on some of the challenges we face and some of the successes we've had in working with our partners on the Great Lakes. We share them with five, six states and we've actually got a pretty good working relationship. It's the national regulations that we need some help with.

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** Thank you, Deputy. A major challenge, as we all know—for those of you in particular who live around the shores of the Great Lakes—is the damage that aquatic invasives are causing. Specifically, the major vector for introduction into the Great Lakes, and consequently into other neighbouring river systems, is through ballast water in ships that are coming in without ballast water on board. As the deputy mentioned earlier, we did work very closely with our federal colleagues at Transport Canada. We're quite pleased with new regulations that were brought forward a year ago that are helping us manage this problem on the Canadian side of the border, helping us close that one big regulatory loophole that's there around aquatic invasives introduction. The remaining loophole is at the US federal government level.

Through a variety of different international bodies, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, another Great Lakes Commission, and through the Council of Great Lakes Governors, we've been working very closely with our state-level colleagues around the issue of invasives, and very specifically on aquatic invasives. With the minister's support, we actually attended the semi-annual meeting of the Great Lakes Commission in Washington a number of weeks ago. We actually joined with state-level colleagues in visiting with members of the House of Representatives and the Senate, putting forward a Canadian position on the problem of aquatic invasives.

1110

I still have to feel optimistic that we're going to see action. In talking to my US-based colleagues, I don't think they've ever felt that they're closer to getting some

ballast-water legislation passed in the US. There was the re-introduction a number of months ago of the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act federally in the US, and two separate ballast-water bills, one in the Senate and one in the House. In working with those legislators, and in working with the Canadian embassy and consular offices around the basin, we are advocating strongly on behalf of Ontario for the need to close this loophole.

Additionally, we've gone beyond that. Within our own area of jurisdiction, we have put regulations in place to restrict the possession of certain live species like snakehead and other kinds of carp, which are dangerous invasives. If they got into the wild from the aquaculture trade or from live sale in fish markets, they could be equally damaging to some of the other species out there. Apart from dealing with ballast water, we are working very closely at the federal level with Environment Canada and other organizations around a national strategy for invasive species response, focused on four primary areas, prevention being the core one; early detection, rapid response, and then effective management. We are working at the Ontario jurisdiction level to have our own Ontario response strategy, our action plan, targeted for completion by December 2008.

For us, it's a critical issue for the future of forestry in the province. It's a critical issue for the citizens around the protection of native species, whether they be fish species or other species. I think it's central to a lot of the work that we're engaged in at this point.

**Mr. Kim Craitor:** Okay, thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Ms. Horwath.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I had a couple of last questions on the issue of habitat. We talked about species at risk, but not so much habitat at risk so far. I think it's interesting because, in remarks earlier, the Auditor General was saying that there is no species protection without habitat protection. That's one of the things we haven't touched on yet. So I'm wondering: Has the ministry begun to develop a comprehensive inventory of all critical habitats for fish and wildlife resources?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** The short answer is yes. We recognize that's critically important. Again, as I mentioned in my opening comments, we can't do it alone. We have to work with partners, whether it's the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited or volunteer organizations. Again, the fishery community works closely with us to preserve and enhance fish habitat. So it's through a lot of partners that we're making sure we're protecting the habitat where these endangered creatures can continue to live.

We've had a number of wonderful successes in the province. The peregrine falcon is one that was on the precipice—pardon the pun, those of you who know the habitats of peregrine falcon.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** We have one living in a big office tower in downtown Hamilton.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** They live on cliff edges. The ministry, together with a lot of academics and private-

sector partners, has helped to bring that species back. In the forestry sector, with our forest management plans, we're making sure we're protecting tree stands that have golden—pardon me, bald—eagles. You had mentioned golden eagles. Bald eagles are a success story. We've brought them back from quite a critical stage in northern Ontario.

So it's not just the Ministry of Natural Resources on its own, it's the ministry working with the private sector—whether it's mineral aggregates, forestry, private landowners or not-for-profit organizations—to enhance and create that habitat; in the Carden Alvar, the loggerhead shrike, again, land purchased by the Nature Conservancy in Northumberland county; the prairie grass, also controlled burns to get out the competing species so prairie tall grasses can come back in Ontario. These are the kinds of partner examples that we have all over the province. It's not just MNR staff, as good as they are, it's a lot of partners working with us to create those habitats.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Where I come from in Hamilton, we have the RBG, the waterfront trust and a number of partners that would be working in there as well. But I'm wondering, you have inventories, though, right? Do you have inventories that exist of what all of the critical habitats are right now, which ones are critical to be dealt with or not?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Again, I'm going to lean on Kevin for more details, but I would not want to say in this room or anywhere that we have a complete inventory. There's a particular plant species that is very sensitive that Charlie Lauer has been working with; the more we look for it, the more we find it. It's interesting that the more time and energy we spend on some of these species, the more we can find. To say that we have a complete and comprehensive inventory going back to the size of the map would be—

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** But you're building one. Is it safe to assume you're building one?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Yes.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** With partners and otherwise. Okay.

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** Yes, and we operate the Natural Heritage Information Centre, which has responsibility for compiling this information, both on the status and location of these rare species but also their habitats. They are currently improving their ability to map rare species habitat, and we're updating our web-based information delivery system for rare species and habitat information. We're trying to make this more readily accessible to the partners that the deputy has spoken about and to other governmental organizations as we share this kind of information.

As the Auditor General has pointed out, to be successful in the protection and recovery of endangered species, your ability to protect habitat is going to be a critical component of this. We think we've got the resources. In addition to the new dollars that the ministry received, this is building on existing base funding for

endangered species of just over \$2 million a year that the ministry had operated with. Additionally, we have had land securement funds, a portion of which have been dedicated toward protecting important habitat, often for endangered species.

One clear example of this—the deputy was mentioning some of the leverage partnering arrangements—is Ontario's participation in the eastern habitat joint venture fund, which is an organization that we engage with and where we're leveraging Ontario's investments in a two- or three-to-one ratio. Between 2006 and 2010, we've secured over 10,000 acres of wetlands and uplands, and we've gone and enhanced a further 10,000 acres. We're also, through that partnership, that joint venture, managing almost 500,000 acres for conservation purposes.

Our need isn't restricted just to Ontario, because many of these species have a binational aspect to them. If they're migratory birds, they're moving through our jurisdiction parts of the year, into the United States or beyond that. We need to work at an international level to ensure that necessary habitat is being set aside for those species.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Thanks. If I were interested myself to look at the inventory as it sits now, recognizing that it's certainly not complete, how would one go about finding that information? How would one access that information?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** I think as a follow-up to this we could arrange to provide access to what information is contained in their database.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** That would be excellent. You mentioned the \$2 million a year and land security funds—

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** Prior to the additions that the ministry received in the 2007-08 fiscal year, the ministry's base budget for endangered species was about \$2 million.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** For habitat or just overall?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** That was the base funding for dealing with endangered species overall across the ministry. Separate from that, we had dollars that were supporting this NHIC organization. We had dollars that were supporting land securement, land acquisition, which fed into partnership arrangements with organizations like Ducks Unlimited, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and then we've had additions of dollars, first in 2007-08—\$3 million for stewardship in 2007-08, increased to \$5 million 2008-09. David, I think it was \$4.15 million for the ministry's base budget addition for last fiscal. I believe that number is up by about six and a half million in 2008-09 for the endangered species program.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Okay. Land securement: Is that partnership funds, so that some of it's from the ministry and some of it's from other partners or with other municipalities?

1120

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** Our key focus is on leveraged results to get essentially a bigger bang for the taxpayers'

dollars. It's working with those organizations that can bring their dollars to the table. The Nature Conservancy of Canada is a very good example. They do receive some federal funding for their initiatives in Ontario, but they are also the beneficiaries of private and corporate donations to support their efforts.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** That's great. Do you earmark a certain amount of investment in your budgets that you would expect on an annual basis might be used to leverage other funds, particularly for—

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** The premise of our land acquisition strategy is that we want to focus on opportunities for leveraged purchases. I wouldn't say that there would not ever be a case where we wouldn't go ahead and purchase a property on our own. On occasions, within Ontario Parks, as an example, we've done that. In some cases—in Rondeau Provincial Park—where there is critical habitat and endangered species, cottage lots which are leased within the park have become available and we've gone into a willing-buyer/willing-seller arrangement to purchase those cottage lots off-lease and then return them to their natural state.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Is there an average amount annually that you would be—

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** I think \$4.7 million last year.

**Mr. David Lynch:** Yes, with the ups and downs, it was a \$4-million to \$6-million range, and then, last—

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Based on the opportunities that arise; right?

**Mr. David Lynch:** Right. Announced in the budget last year was another \$27 million over four years for land securement. So that would definitely be an uptick in our spending plan.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I've been to Rondeau Provincial Park. That's really helpful. Thank you for that information.

There are a couple of questions that I had around enforcement particularly. There's been a lot of attention to and media around—and I think my colleague John Yakabuski was asking questions about funding particularly. I'm wondering about the extent to which the enforcement branch is—I think we talked about capital dollars earlier, about the investment in capital and the issue around the new funding being basically replacement funding for old fleet or replacement fleet. In terms of operational support provided to the enforcement branch, is there an average per conservation officer for field enforcement activity? I raise this because there's been a lot of concern around that and there's been a lot of reference to enforcement officers not having gas for their tanks or those kinds of things. Could you give us a picture of what that looks like and what it's looked like over the last couple of years in terms of operational resources to enforcement officers, specifically for field enforcement activities?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Again, I'm going to rely on staff for some help with the technical details. But as the Auditor General was doing his work and there was some public profile around the issue of our enforcement

officers' funding, the ministry was successful in fiscal year 2007-08 in getting an infusion into our base of an additional \$1.6 million, which has gone a long way to help. With this year's budget enhancement, we're hoping to be able to add to that as well.

What has been challenging is that while we have been focusing on the dollars in many of these conversations, the other part of our change has been the way in which we structure the enforcement branch—

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Is the risk-based—

**Mr. David Lindsay:** That's right. Again, the team is very professional, long-experienced and our actual full-time equivalent count has remained relatively static over the last decade. Somebody's going to correct me on the number. I won't give the number off the top of my head because I don't remember it exactly, but it's remained within 5% of the same number of conservation badge officers over the last decade.

Some of our funding for operation has been enhanced and improved, but we're trying to deploy them differently. So if you've got a commercial fish operation which may be impacting thousands of fish versus a conservation officer looking for one or two casual anglers, focusing on where there's a potential for impact on thousands of fish is a more risk-based approach. Law enforcement practices have adopted these methodologies in police forcing. We're bringing those same kinds of practices to the conservation system. A lot of the churn in the conversation is focusing on the dollars, which are important—I think I've mentioned that several times now; we would always welcome more money—it's not just the dollars, it's how we're deploying our resources. We're hoping to actually get more out of the productive work of the staff.

Some of the numbers I have here—as a result of the infusion of dollars in fiscal 2007-08, we've had an increase of over 9,000 hours of field enforcement and we've reduced office time by over 8,000 hours, so getting them out more and not in the office as much. We've had a 12% increase in field contacts, a 14% increase in warnings issued and an uptick of 4%—270 additional charges were laid. So it's not just input-based but it's output-based: What are we getting for the money we're spending? We're watching that very closely, trying to make sure we're getting best use of taxpayers' dollars and best use of the skill and knowledge of the excellent staff we have.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I don't know if there's any more in addition to that. That really is helpful because obviously it's been a contentious issue. The concern that we were talking about recently was whether or not you've actually put in place the measurements that will determine whether your risk-based plans are actually being successful. Further to that, can you identify from that information if there are more resources needed to make risk-based plans work to their optimal efficiency?

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** If I may, just to add to that, in addition to changing to the risk-based system, the other significant change that happened, just about the time of

the audit, was that the reporting structure and our funding structure were centralized for enforcement. Some of the noise about individual officers out in a certain work location had so much money to support them—a lot of that funding was centralized for efficiency purposes. An individual office in the past might have gotten \$5,000 to support their vehicle, so they could run a vehicle. We centralized all of the vehicle support, purchasing and all those sorts of things and we were able to do it cheaper. The individual on the ground still has his vehicle and it's operating, but the money that used to be sitting right with them in their field office is now centralized. We're getting a better deal, doing it more efficiently, but the person at the local level says, "Oh, gee, I have less money." No, you still have your vehicle and it's still there and being paid for, but it's being paid for centrally. In fact, we're getting more value for our money now. In addition to the change to the risk base, there was also a change in the reporting relationship and how we manage the money. That created some confusion in the system as well.

**Mr. David Lynch:** If I can just add further to Charlie's comments here, as he says, the computer cost, the lease cost, the insurance, the training all got pushed into a central allocation model. A proxy for what a conservation officer would have per year—and this goes up and down—is about \$9,000 after, like I say, we strip away all the rest. So that's about \$9,000 for a conservation officer to do their job. And just quickly here, as the deputy was looking for the figure—266 conservation officers would be the 2007 figure.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** In 2001-02 that same comparable number was 258. We had 258 in 2001-02; we now have 266.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** But with these new pieces of legislation coming online, a lot more work to be done, I would think, in terms of the—

**Mr. David Lindsay:** It would be our hope that the efficiency in use of equipment and this risk-based approach would allow us to get more contact time and more value for the effort we're expending on protecting the natural resources. So it's not just more head count, which was slightly up—I don't want to overstate that case; we're up by eight individuals.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It's a big place.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** It's a big place. That's why the use of state-of-the-art equipment and the risk-based approach are what we've been focusing on.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Thanks very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Mr. Hardeman?

1130

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Thank you very much for your presentation.

I just want to start with the conservation allotment. In my community, there's a lot of concern—I'm getting letters from people—about how we have our conservation officer's car sitting there and they can't put gas in it because of the allotment. We hear from the answers that

the dollars are there. They're not quite as high as we would like, but they're there. Is the actual work of the conservation officer decided by how much gas he has or is it decided by how much time he has to do the work?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** That's an excellent question and I'm glad you asked it, because we do want to move to an outputs-based approach as opposed to an inputs-based approach. Number of miles driven around may have been a metric in previous years. Number of contacts, number of incidents, which I mentioned a couple of minutes ago, are the metrics we'd like to move toward, hence the phrase "risk-based." Where are the biggest risks to our natural resources? What's our objective here to protect the natural resources? Where are the biggest threats, and are we focusing staff time and resources?

While driving through a hunting area or boating through a fishing area might have been the traditional methods years ago, we're now trying, in addition to maintaining those, to make sure we're using the best investigative techniques where we suspect that there may be some organized activity happening, where there may be overfishing by a commercial fishery or other higher-risk activities taking place. There is some office time required in that kind of investigative work, as opposed to patrol work, hence, the risk-management system tries to bring that balance: What's the appropriate use of time in the field versus time on investigative work?

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** Each year, we do planning at field offices. It's not just the enforcement folks, it's all of the folks in the office who sit down and talk about what those risks are and where the best place to spend our time is, and "Gee, there's been an increase in illegal harvesting of wood," or something that might not be related to fish and wildlife.

As the deputy mentioned, we have a very, very broad mandate and cover a wide array of activities—illegal or accidental starting of forest fires that need some investigation because maybe there's been a flurry of that sort of activity.

On an annual basis, we sit down with management staff and enforcement staff and develop a plan and determine where the priorities are and where we will invest our time and effort. So, there is extensive planning, analysis of risk and determining where we'll put our enforcement efforts.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Having said all of that, we do have more money for gas.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I want to bring it back to a very simple question. I get told that a conservation officer could get called on a Friday afternoon because of something that should be investigated, and he'll say, "I can't go because I've already used up my allotment of money this week." Is that possible? Is that happening in the ministry?

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** Every time a call comes in, there's an assessment done. Lots of calls don't need an immediate response. The situation will be looked into. It will be investigated. It doesn't mean you have to jump in the car and go.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** It was a very pointed question, and I was hoping for a very pointed answer. I would've liked to hear, "No, that won't happen," not all the reasons why it might be happening—because that's what I'm hearing now: "He may not have to go; he may assess that he doesn't need to go." I was told that if they called, the answer was actually, "I would go but I've already used up my gas allotment; I can't go this week."

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** No, the answer would be, "I will look into that; I will investigate it," but "investigate" may not mean jumping in the car and driving.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I didn't say it would. I just said that he would not, on a Friday afternoon, be able to say, "I can't go because I haven't got the gas." I think it's rather serious.

I was looking through the information that research gave us. This issue was discussed in the Legislature, and the question was from one of the members to the minister.

"The reality is that conservation officers don't have the funding to go into the bush to do what they're mandated to do by this Legislature. Across Ontario, we have conservation officers who are lucky if they're able to put fuel in their trucks and get out in the bush one or two days a week. They held bake sales all last winter to raise money to put gas in their trucks. So I ask you the question again: Why has this been allowed to happen under your watch, and what are you going to do to fix it?"

Obviously we know that sometimes the questions in the Legislature tend to be what they call "over the top." I wasn't nearly as concerned with the question as I was with the answer of the minister. The minister said:

"As a matter of fact, the officers did not hold bake sales. There were other folks who actually held the bake sales for them to raise what they felt was an issue. Unfortunately, they didn't give the officers the money that they did raise. They kept it. Having said that, we gave them the money...."

If that was happening, it's one thing to say, "We'll give them more money so it doesn't happen," but what has changed to make sure that that doesn't happen again? I just can't believe a minister of the crown would say, "No, they didn't hold their own bake sales; somebody held them for them"—to put fuel in the vehicles to enforce the laws of our province. I just don't think we're that type of province. I just wonder, what have we changed that that can happen? This was the minister who said that, so I presumed it was true.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Your question is entirely appropriate: What was done to rectify the situation where there wasn't enough money in some parts of the province? The answer is twofold.

First, in fiscal year 2007-08, there was an additional infusion of \$1.6 million to the base. With last week's announcement, we intend to put even more in. So the year in which that incident occurred—the organized bake sales—we did put more money in, so that's an immediate response.

The second is the efficiency and the effectiveness of resources being used: We put more money in; are we now spending it on the right thing? That's where we speak to our procurement strategy: centralizing our procurement so that we're getting the best bang for our buck, wherever possible, to make the money go further; and the use of the funds on a risk-based approach—where is the best opportunity to achieve our mandate, which is the protection of the natural resource? So it's a threefold response.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Somewhat in the same vein, Deputy, you mentioned that it's risk-based, and that we're actually sending our inspectors or our enforcement out to better places, shall we say—to go fishing where the fish are. And you said that we're getting, on time spent and time travelled, a greater number of charges. Is that what you said?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** I have those numbers. For the additional \$1.6 million that was put in in fiscal year 2007-08, we have an increase of 9,495 hours of field enforcement; a reduction of 8,000 hours of office time; an increase of 12% in field contacts; an increase of 14% in warnings issued; and 270—a year-over-year increase of 4% in charges laid.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Do you have any information that could tell us whether the reason we have more charges is because more crimes are being committed, or are we catching more people committing crimes?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Actually, when we were discussing this at the staff level, we were asking ourselves some of those questions, and there's another interesting way to look at this. If we're moving to more of a risk-based approach, catching one individual who may be fishing without an appropriate valid licence versus catching a poacher who has a dozen creatures in their bag, that actually is a more important activity to protect the resource than catching somebody who may have an expired licence. So there's an interesting way to play with those numbers. If we're laying lots of charges with expired licences but we're letting the people who are actually capturing the animals get away on us, then that's not necessarily the most efficient use of the time and money.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** One other area, which Mrs. Van Bommel was questioning on earlier, was the predator problem we have, in particular in southwestern Ontario, with our crops and wildlife. One of the answers was something about—

**1140**

**Mr. David Lindsay:** I've never heard deer referred to as predators before.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** They're predators for the grain.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** That's true. I've just never heard that before.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** The farmers think when half an acre of grain is gone that predators were there.

There were suggestions made about proper fencing to keep wildlife out and so forth. Who's the ministry

involved with that? Who puts up the fencing to keep wildlife out of the field?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** We don't currently have that kind of a program right now. It's something that we've been discussing with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs—what other mitigating strategies can we be exploring as the deer population continues to increase and be a problem in some parts of the province? The Ministry of Transportation is looking at pulling back the potential feed for deer from the highways, and we're talking to ag and food about other things we can do to work with farmers.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Can I tell the farmers that something is in the wind, that something is going to happen? Obviously, we've done a lot of talking in governments over the years, particularly when it's a discussion between ministries, and sometimes nothing comes out of it. We spend a lot of time talking, with no results. Is there something coming forward that's going to deal with that? Obviously, the farming community has been asking for something to be done, even if it's nothing more than just increasing the fees they pay for losses through predators and through crop losses. Is the ministry actually working on some success, as opposed to just investigating the problem?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** As I'd mentioned in an earlier remark, we have been working on a human-deer conflict strategy, but beyond that, we've been looking at a generic human-wildlife conflict strategy for the ministry, as it relates to a number of different species. We've been receiving a variety of complaints around predation resulting from coyotes or wolves, in some cases, or in the north, from bears. We've even had some complaints about wild turkeys, which were reintroduced into the province a number of years ago.

We began with a broad consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including members of the farm community, sitting at a table, along with other organizations like the OFAH and some of the ENGOs, to help us draft this strategy. We're looking at bringing that forward for approval and release, we hope, shortly. Following the strategy's release, we think there'll be a good opportunity for us to continue to engage with those organizations, and at the community level, as we start to then develop and apply tools in response to the problem.

As I'd mentioned, one of the critical tools that we'd used in the past was the hunting and the lengthening of seasons—and other different hunting techniques in response to the challenge. But there is a range of other tools and techniques that are being used in other jurisdictions that we're borrowing from. We've mentioned a couple as examples: different types of fencing for farmers, or setbacks—different approaches for the design and construction of highways. There is a range of different approaches that could be utilized in response to the problem.

I think we can expect that we're never going to deal with a static situation and that as a result of other conditions taking place and the general cycle of increases

or decreases in wildlife populations, we need a strategy that has some dynamic aspects. It might need to focus on deer in certain years, but if the deer population declines, it may need to focus on other species that are creating some conflicts with people.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** We were talking earlier about creating habitat for our wildlife. A lot of farmers today believe that the ministry has done a great job of asking them and having them create the habitat.

You mentioned the wild turkeys. My part of the country is where they've been trying to bring in turkeys. They put them on conservation authority lands or they put them in the county woods, and the farmers next door have to feed them. The turkeys are doing quite well, thank you very much, because they get out there, particularly in years when the snow comes too early and they can't get all the corn off—and by spring, there's no corn to get off because our wild turkeys have got it all.

I think there's a real need for the ministry to look at something to help with what we, as a society, are creating with the wildlife around our agricultural lands and to make sure that we don't expect them to feed the birds, shall we say.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Thank you very much for appearing here before us this morning. I have been having to go in and out, so I wanted to ask a specific question. I have a hatchery in Haliburton, and it's got the Haliburton gold, which is a species right within the five lakes up in Haliburton.

In 2000, they created the hatchery. They worked with the MNR, and the volunteers did a lot of the research. Anyway, they've been working well. They had some funding allotted to them. They do fundraise also, but they had the government funding allotted. They are told now that in July 2008 they're only going to be receiving \$3,000 a year, and there's no commitment if there's multi-year funding.

I guess the general question is where the funds come from for the hatcheries. This has been a community project. They do a lot of education, they're all tested, they work with natural resources. I think the lead on that was Dr. Chris Wilson way back when it started up.

I have the specific question of the hatchery in Haliburton and how money is allotted to that hatchery; and maybe from the special program, the dollars that are allotted for hatcheries?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** I think, Deputy, this could relate to CFWIP funding that would be managed out of our field services division. We do, of course, operate a fish culture program, with a number of significant-sized hatcheries around the province. The work of the ministry, its fish culture program and the nine stations that we operate, is supplemented by a number of different community-based hatchery programs. It sounds like the example you're citing is one of those hatcheries. They make application to and are eligible for funding out of our CFWIP program.

Charlie, I don't know if you have any details on that.

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** Just to add to that, that funding is always on an annual basis. You made reference to no long-term commitment. The community fish and wildlife involvement program, the CFWIP program, is always on an annual basis, and the groups apply each year. The applications are reviewed and funding allocated. You mentioned about a dollar amount—

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Yes, would you mind? In 2004, they did get from the MNR \$100,000 over four years. So they did have a multi-year commitment at one point. I can't tell you the specific program, other than they just told me it was MNR.

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** That's \$100,000?

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Yes, \$100,000 over four years, so \$25,000 a year. That's why I was just asking. You're saying that's usually on an annual basis through the CFWIP fund. This Haliburton gold trout is specific to Haliburton county and the five lakes. I didn't know if that would fall into any—if you could say—species at risk, but I'm just saying it is distinctive and that's what—

**Mr. David Lindsay:** I'm not sure, Ms. Scott, if I've got information at my fingertips to be able to speak specifically to the Haliburton hatchery, but we can explore that a little further for you.

Generically, the CFWIP program my colleagues have been referring to has been in operation for a number of years—since the early 1980s, actually. The average funding for the community fish hatcheries is about \$1,000 a year. So if your friends and colleagues are benefiting as much as they are, they may want to look at some of their other colleagues.

The Ministry of Natural Resources in 2007 put an additional \$200,000 over two years outside of the CFWIP program into volunteer fish hatcheries, working with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. So we've been putting additional funding into the volunteer programs and working with our partners again to try to make sure we've got a robust fishery. Details on the specific Haliburton example I don't have in front of me.

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** I've just received some information from Cameron Mack, who's my director of the fish and wildlife branch. He did have some information about this specific example you've raised. In that case, there was a contractual arrangement entered into with that hatchery, which had been in that circumstance rearing fish on behalf of the ministry for some specific targeted purpose. From time to time, we enter into contractual arrangements of that nature if we're looking to supplement some of the ministry's own fish culture operations program that we run.

1150

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** This is run by the Haliburton Highlands Outdoors Association. As for sustainability of the whole program, they're doing as much as they can. Just for planning for them, when you say that \$200,000 over two years was put in before, do they work through the MNR or do they apply directly for funds? I think I asked before about the special funding for hatcheries. Does that come out of any of the fees that you have for

fish and wildlife? Do those funds come out of the special purpose account?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** The main hatchery program funding does come out of the special purpose account. We'd have to confirm whether the CFWIP funding comes out of the SPA or not. With respect to that hatchery, as Charlie Lauer has said, this is a program that provides funding on an annual basis. It's application driven, so organizations come forward with proposals. Those proposals are assessed and considered. Then decisions are made about which programs are funded out of the available dollars.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Okay. I can do some follow-up specifically with the ministry after. Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Mr. Brownell?

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** Actually, Mr. Chair, I had two questions and, thanks to my colleagues from Niagara and Hamilton, both were answered.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Good. Mrs. Albanese?

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** Thank you very much for your presentation. My riding is in the heart of Toronto, so we don't have any rural areas. We're not along the Great Lakes, but we do have a very nice park that the residents are very proud of and a cherished pond. But I do like canoeing, hiking, nature and wildlife.

I had a specific question on recommendation number 10, on the recreational fisheries management. It says that the ministry is moving from a lake-to-lake management process to an ecological planning and management scale. I wanted to know how much work had been done so far and what this planning would take into account.

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** I'd be more than happy to respond. That's an excellent question. As noted in the Auditor General's report, there were specific references to us developing formalized fisheries management plans and looking at appropriate timelines for implementation. In 2005, the minister of the day announced that we'd be moving towards an ecologically based framework for recreational fisheries management. We've spent a considerable amount of time working with stakeholder organizations and other partnered levels of government like the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in the design of this model. Essentially, we're moving from a lake-by-lake management system to an ecological system for managing fisheries issues on an eco-zone basis. We think this is definitely a far more efficient approach for us to be managing the recreational fishery on behalf of the members of the public and the many thousands of people who come to Ontario from outside of the province to enjoy this particular sport. It is going to be coupled with the support of a broad-scale monitoring program that we're designing. It's planned to be implemented this current fiscal year.

To support the introduction of the new ecological framework for fisheries, we began with the creation of three pilot councils, which are then in place, providing

opportunities for community input into decisions that are made around the management of the fishery. The combination of the knowledge and information obtained out of the monitoring process can then be fed back to these fisheries councils, with broad representation at the community level, to give us advice as to when, where and how we should be managing individual decisions with respect to that fishery: seasons for fisheries, sanctuaries for fisheries, size limits, slot sizes for fisheries in some cases.

In 2008, beyond the original three pilot projects, we're creating three more advisory councils. We're moving ahead with funding for that. Our planning is now looking at taking into account the requirements for the entire resource. In moving away from a lake-by-lake analysis, it's going to allow us to take careful examination of things like broad climate change impacts and invasive species impacts that we've spoken to already, and then, of course, human behaviour. The one species in the province that we found to be the most nimble, the most mobile, is the elusive angler who is able to go from lake to lake and find those great fishing opportunities that we provide. Of course, we have to account for fishing pressure when it comes to making decisions around how we are setting limits in these new ecological zones for fishing purposes.

We are hard at it. We're continuing this work. It's a multi-year process of getting this plan in place and getting all of these fishery zone councils up and running for the 20 new fishery zones that have been established.

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** In which areas of the province do you have these three pilot councils and the other three advisory councils?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** I'm just going to check my notes on that because that's not something I've got at my fingertips, but if you can give me a minute, I can certainly get you that answer.

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** Sure, no problem. And you can move—

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Okay. Ms. Horwath?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Yes, very briefly, just following up on Mr. Hardeman's question. We started talking about the raw numbers of new charges being laid. Have you drilled down to figure out if they're ones like the expired fishing licences, or if they're more serious—you know, the guy with five moose in his trunk?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** I haven't got that level of analysis. As Charlie was saying, we do an annual review on what we've done in the previous year. That's part of the input into deciding what we need to focus on in the coming year. So based on region by region, where the highest risks are, they gather up all that data on a region-by-region basis, review it, and it provides input for the next year's risk plan.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** So then the answer would be yes, you'll drill down and get types of charges, and then that feeds back into your risk management plan and changes that need to be made to it?

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** That's great. Really briefly, the other question I had was just around—we didn't talk much about the black bear management. In 2006-07, did management units continue to exceed the allowable harvest of adult female bears?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Ask that again; I'm sorry.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Did management units continue to exceed the allowable harvest of adult female bears—I guess that was a problem in the past—and if so, which management units? Obviously, one of my researchers wanted this information, so I thought I would ask it.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** We'll see if we can dig that out for you.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** If you could, that would be great. I guess the issue that came up in the report, anyways, was tourist outfitters who are continually exceeding the sustainability guidelines for maximum bear harvest. The question is, what enforcement measures have been taken to deal with that exceeding of guidelines?

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** Part of what we've put in place was a harvest guideline. The way it was measured was so many bears per square hectare of land, and it's a general guideline that we use across the province. We recognize that that's not the perfect answer because certainly the productivity of the land is different from one part of the province to another, based on growing degree days, soil types, food sources and all of those sorts of things.

We are actually in the process of developing a more refined guideline, such that the more appropriate level of harvest will be set up for a certain area. By having just one generic guideline, there would be areas where that may have been exceeded, but the more refined guidelines will show that those areas are in fact more productive and are capable of more harvest and can sustain more harvest. So we're refining that guideline to more accurately reflect the productivity of the various areas across the province.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Do you have a timeline on that initiative?

**Mr. David Lindsay:** My note here says, "Consultations on the enhanced bear management framework in the coming months."

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** "In the coming months"; okay. Well, we'll stay tuned.

The other thing is just around the enforcement measures on the tourist outfitters who are exceeding the guidelines. Any response to that one? So what happens?

**Mr. Kevin Wilson:** We certainly work with outfitters and we control their harvest through the allocation tools that are there, and we can set quotas for outfitters. If an outfitter then harvests more than the allocation, then enforcement action could be considered in that circumstance.

1200

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Has there been any? If this has been indicated as a situation that has been occurring,

have there been any enforcement measures taken against these outfitters, or is it more of a negotiated kind of relationship?

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** I guess the other piece I would say on that is that this is a guideline that we're attempting to follow. The guideline needs some refinement. We often, in our discussions with the various outfitters, may agree that there is good reason to exceed the guideline in those areas and that additional harvest may be appropriate, again, based on productivity and some of those sorts of things. Enforcement action may not be the appropriate response in any case, because it may be appropriate to have a different level of harvest than the current guideline.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** In your memory you don't recall there being any particular enforcement measures, because it's all been this in-flux situation in terms of the guideline and needing to refine it. Is that correct?

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** There has certainly been significant enforcement activity related to illegal bear activity, where certain outfitters may have been illegally participating in the trade of bear galls and those sorts of things. There has been significant enforcement activity for those sorts of things. The business of just an over—

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Exceeding the maximum.

**Mr. Charlie Lauer:** Over the guideline—off the top of my head, I'm not sure, so I won't say on that one.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** All right. If you've come up with something, that would be helpful to understand that.

That was it, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Okay. No further questions? Mr. Deputy, you wanted to—

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Just that staff have been very helpful, and if you would let me, on the record, thank them and acknowledge all the hard work they did in putting together our briefing materials for today. They've been passing us a number of notes in an attempt to try and respond in a timely fashion to a number of questions that were raised. Just in the order I have the scraps of paper in front of me here—and staff, feel free to help me if I veer from the script:

Mr. Yakabuski had asked about the Endangered Species Act and some of the funding and how that was working. The base funding was \$2 million. They injected another \$6.5 million, plus \$5 million for stewardship, for a bottom-line number of \$13.5 million.

Then we also have land acquisition. As I was explaining, working with the Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, other partners and conservation authorities, we have a land acquisition program. So there are a number of ways we're infusing dollars into the endangered species program.

MPP Horwath asked about the moose surveys. Last year, we had 12 surveys—pardon me; the average we try to do every year is 12 on a rotational basis. I believe it's every three years or four years we try to get around the

province. We try to average 12 a year. Last year, we accomplished eight surveys. There were seven others that we were working on, but due to bad weather or because of too small a sample size, they couldn't get up in the air enough days and it wasn't a valid sample survey. So it's very dependent on weather, but our efforts are to try and do a dozen a year and rotate around the province.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. David Lindsay:** You were asking us about the various councils. In Thunder Bay fisheries management zone 6—I was up there a couple of weeks ago—they've got a great committee working together on their fisheries management and they hope to expand that in the coming years.

Sault Ste. Marie has got another active group of community volunteers who are helping us, and Peterborough fisheries zone 17. The three more that we're planning in this fiscal year are three of the Great Lakes. We want to do one for Lake Ontario, one for Lake Erie and one for Lake Huron. It will involve both members of the fishing community and MNR staff to work out how we can best manage the fisheries in these particular zones.

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** The fleet vehicles, preliminary allocation: We have 150 going to our parks branch. There are 75 that are being split.

So the purpose of your question was fish and wildlife: 14 specifically for fish and wildlife in the Great Lakes branch and then 61 are going to the field offices. They would be used by fish and wildlife staff or on fish and wildlife activities, if from the field office. They're pool vehicles that are made available to the fish and wildlife survey work or activities that they're undertaking. The rest are other parts of the business—the forest fire fighting—and other things we do in the ministry across the province. So your question about what vehicles are going for fish and wildlife: 14 specifically to the Great Lakes fish and wildlife branch, and 61 to field offices which are at the disposal of regional fish and wildlife staff.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Thank you very much. I will try to capture in a letter to you the questions that Ms. Horwath put forth, as well as any other outstanding questions we might have to you, and then you can respond to the committee with regard to those questions.

The committee will recess for five minutes, and then once the room is cleared, we will sit in camera and instruct the researcher as to how we would like the report prepared.

**Mr. David Lindsay:** Let me thank the committee members for your time.

**The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling):** Thank you.

*The committee continued in closed session at 1205.*







# CONTENTS

Thursday 3 April 2008

<b>2007 Annual Report, Auditor General: Section 3.06, fish and wildlife program .....</b>	<b>P-87</b>
Ministry of Natural Resources .....	P-87
Mr. David Lindsay, deputy minister	
Mr. Kevin Wilson, assistant deputy minister, natural resource management division	
Mr. David Lynch, acting assistant deputy minister, corporate management division	
Mr. Charlie Lauer, assistant deputy minister, field services division	

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