



## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

### Official Record of Debate

(Hansard)

#### FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

March 11, 2010

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** My question is to the Acting Premier, I guess. Minister, as you may or may not be aware, there are some great concerns coming out of the Ministry of Natural Resources. Recently the MNR undertook a complete organizational restructuring, and before that, the MNR lost the forestry file. In fact, the new internal MNR structure no longer includes the fish and wildlife branch.

Anglers, hunters, trappers, outdoor groups and organizations are quite concerned about this. They see this as a continued erosion of the MNR away from its core responsibilities of fish and wildlife management. Minister, I must admit that I am just as concerned, as the ministry continues to lose the important traditional values that it has long identified with for the people in the province of Ontario.

Minister, can you and your government reassure the outdoors community that these major changes will not diminish the traditional fish and wildlife roles of the MNR?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I'm happy to have the opportunity to address the question. I know that the honourable member knows that, as a rural member and for other reasons, I am particularly interested in the operations of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

What I can say to the honourable member is that I am aware that there has been some administrative change in terms of the organization of the Ministry of Natural Resources. He has particularly identified the importance of the fish and wildlife branch, and I would agree with him that it is a very important function of government.

In terms of how the management of fish and wildlife resources is now ordered in the province with the Ministry of Natural Resources, I'm not particularly familiar with that. I am aware that the minister is certainly doing her very best to ensure that those functions of the ministry that—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary?

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** Acting Premier, here is what the executive director of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters had to say about the MNR's structural changes: "It is regrettable that the one branch anglers and hunters most identified with has been splintered. Obviously, we are concerned about the marginalization of fish and wildlife, and by extension, fishing and hunting, through the division of the fish and wildlife program."

Minister, because of the elimination of the fish and wildlife branch, there have also been concerns expressed relating to the accounting of the SPA, or the special purpose account, monies from fishing and hunting licence revenues being properly spent on fish and wildlife programs.

Will you and your government promise to uphold the MNR's traditional core functions of fish and wildlife management? Can you guarantee that the fish and wildlife SPA, special purpose account, revenues will be spent on fish and wildlife management, not on species-at-risk or your government's biodiversity agenda?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I'm happy to have the opportunity, on behalf of the minister, to stress today that the only thing that has changed at the ministry in terms of the services is the names of the branches that lead the work. In terms of the resources that are devoted and dedicated to protecting our natural resources, fish and wildlife particularly, they remain intact.

I'm surprised that the Federation of Anglers and Hunters perhaps wouldn't have that information. I'm delighted that you have provided the opportunity in the House today for me to make that clarification and also to state quite unequivocally that, as a government, we will continue to support the investments and the sound management of the fish and wildlife resources of the province of Ontario.