



Hansard Official Report of Debates

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

39th Parliament

JOHN YAKABUSKI, M.P.P. - RENFREW-NIPISSING-PEMBROKE

Monday, Mar 29

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, when your government passed the Endangered Species Act under another minister, you promised you would use the Crown Forest Sustainability Act as the regulatory tool when establishing habitat protection zones. Your government broke that promise.

Will you, as the new minister, attempt to re-establish credibility with the forestry industry by demonstrating good faith and doing what you said you would do in the first place: use the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and stop taking orders from special interests in Toronto and Brampton?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: This is a very important issue and it's something that I have been working on in the first two months of my mandate. Certainly the Endangered Species Act is a cornerstone of our government's mandate in the next couple of years. It makes Ontario a North American leader, and part of being a North American leader is consulting.

We've worked very hard with the forestry sector and our environmentalists. We've consulted all of the people in the north, and we continue to consult with them. I intend to be visiting the north in the next couple of months to ask them again how the Endangered Species Act can work better with their communities and to make sure that we find a balance on the legislation and economic development that happens in the north. Certainly it's something I'm very seized with, and we'll try and do more consultation with the forestry sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: In fact, you haven't spoken very much with the industry. The permitting system that you have decided to work with is not working and will never work.

Forestry operators in my riding are among the most committed when it comes to protecting our natural resources. They have made it clear that your permitting system is just a fancy way of saying no. Your regulations are not based on science, rather political science. This industry is in crisis. Is it not time for you to stand up for what is right, not just for what you believe is in your best political interest? Please, stand up and do what is right for this industry and all of Ontario.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I am pleased to stand up to defend the Endangered Species Act. Certainly our government voted in favour of it. It's my understanding you did not, so it's ironic that you would come back to us to challenge our position.

I've met with the forestry sector. I've met with people who care about the caribou. I've met with, and certainly intend to meet more with First Nations. We have a lot of stakeholders. This is too important an issue. We need to get it right. It's important that we meet with the forestry sector, and they're actually a very good resource. The plan they put together in their forest management plan is so good that there are a lot of components to the forest management act now that will help the Endangered Species Act. We intend to continue to work with them. They're great partners and stewards of the land