

## **Record from Hansard**

**May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

### **Third Reading Debate on Bill 198, Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act, 2007**

**Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington):** I'm pleased to have a moment to speak to this bill at third reading, Bill 198. Unfortunately, because of the fact that this bill has been time-allocated by this government, which promised never to time-allocate legislation—in opposition, they used to complain about time allocation motions all the time. I recall those days quite vividly. Yet this bill, Bill 198, is time-allocated, so there is limited time for those of us in opposition who are concerned about this issue. So I will be brief.

**1730**

I want to say that I believe it's incumbent upon the government and all of us to protect our groundwater for future generations, and I believe the Ministry of the Environment must take its responsibility for approving water-taking permits very seriously. In my opinion, no water-taking permit should be approved unless hydrogeological and scientific studies prove that groundwater resources will not be depleted as a result of the approval of the application and neighbouring wells will not be negatively impacted. The Ministry of the Environment, in my view, should carefully monitor large-volume water users to ensure that they are not exceeding the quantity of water that they're permitted to draw because of their permit, and if they are taking more water than they are allowed, their permits should be revoked.

The government should examine the feasibility and practicality of designating plastic water bottles under the waste diversion program if recycling rates do not improve significantly. Making the bottles refillable should even be considered, in my view. As well, the government should consult with the industry on setting a royalty fee which would be paid to municipalities that have water-bottling plants within their boundaries, similar to what exists for the extraction of gravel.

In my area, in Wellington county, there are at least two large water-bottling plants, one in the town of Erin and one in the township of Puslinch, and there is a great deal of community concern about whether or not water-taking permits should be extended and approved. Certainly I'm interested in this issue and want to do what I can to ensure that the public interest is upheld with respect to this issue.

I will be supporting the bill, but I'm also hoping that the Minister of the Environment will arrange a briefing for me very soon so that I can make sure that I'm completely brought up to speed on all of the issues surrounding these water-taking permit applications. I look forward to the minister arranging that briefing as soon as possible.