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# **Official Report of Debates (Hansard)**

# **Journal des débats (Hansard)**

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Speaker  
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Président  
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière  
Deborah Deller

We do agree in the House that local food is extremely important. We've debated this, as the member from Beaches–East York said, and we've had enough conversation. We're all in agreement that this act is a lot of fluff. Instead of this act taking action to support local farmers, to employ local farmers and to provide local food to the Ontario consumer, this government's act is making plans for a plan.

We know how important it is to have local food production created in Ontario, and that it sustains jobs. This is an industry that has been here from the moment of time because growing food is a part of survival. If we don't have access to local food, then we're not going to have access to food so we can continue to sustain ourselves. It's extremely important that we keep that in mind, but by the same token, we need to pass this bill to committee because we're all in agreement that it is a very important thing to do and that local food is something that has to be sustainable.

We also need to make sure we're promoting the advertising of local food and helping our farmers—not just having a lot of fluff about how great local food is, but having a real plan so that we can keep our farmers in our economy, in a job and creating the local food that we all want to see here in the House and that all our communities want to see in our farmers' markets. Part of that is making it a strong bill so that we can have that support for farmers, so they can continue on with the good work they have been doing.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you have two minutes.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I want to thank my colleague from Beaches–East York; the Minister of Health, who didn't speak too long; and the members from Huron–Bruce and London–Fanshawe for their comments as well.

To the member from Huron–Bruce: Thanks for the shout-out to Crystal Mackay. It's always great to hear about the fine agricultural people we have in Renfrew county. I say to the member for Huron–Bruce, maybe she can make it up to the Beachburg Fair one of these days. It's the first big fair in Renfrew county, always around the 20th or the 23rd of July. It's a great fair and it really shows what kind of community spirit there is, and the hard-working spirit of our agricultural people.

I appreciate all the comments that have been made, and I think that there's an opportunity here for us all to renew our commitment to our agricultural people across Ontario. They do such a tremendous job for us. Our products are of the highest quality. They are safe. They are tasty. They are nutritious. We need to spend a lot more time letting the world know just how great our products are, but more importantly, letting each other know not only how good our products are but where they come from. They come from your neighbours. I know that if you live in the city of Toronto, you may not think of that, but your neighbours are not that far away. They're outside of the city of Toronto, and they're producing the kind of quality food that makes us among

the healthiest people in the world here in Ontario and Canada.

**1620**

I think the Local Food Week is an opportunity to blow our horn, maybe, champion a few things and put a stamp on a special week of the year. But let's not forget: Our commitment to farmers should be at least as good as their commitment has been to us.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):** Further debate?

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to the Local Food Act. I know we've had a lot of debate on this, but it's nice to talk about something as wholesome and that is such an important part of our heritage here in the province. Almost all of our families—many of our families—date back as farmers in different communities and different townships. To me, it's something that's almost family-like.

First of all, I should tell you that my wife, the girl I married, was a dairy farmer's daughter. Even today—

**Interjection:** She's got the hair.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** She's got the hair, yes.

Even today, we always travel the back roads wherever we go so we can look at all the different farms and what's new in the operations, because once you've been a farmer, you're sort of a farmer for life. You've always got that love and concern for the land.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I should tell you that both of my children have decided in the last year to get into real estate, and they've both bought farms. I'm very proud of them, because they've made deals with neighbouring farmers—they both have full-time jobs—to make sure the hay is put in place and taken off and make sure there are crops put in on a rotating basis.

With my daughter's farm—she's into horses; I think they have four horses now. They're right across the road from a farm where two of my granddaughters train horses all the time. So agriculture has become a very important part of our family right now. I'm looking forward to doing a lot of work out at their farms. I like doing physical work anyhow, and I'm looking forward to helping them both a lot over the next few years.

I also want to say a few things about local food. One of the things I really enjoy—I don't know how many other people in the room do this, but I love going to farmers' markets. It's a great place to meet people. You meet the very sensible, common sense type of people, and they're in there on the weekends, earning a few dollars, whether it's produce or some fruit or maple syrup—that type of thing. It's just fun to go and be part of that. Again, it goes back to our heritage and the kind of people we are. All of my farmers' markets in my riding seem to be doing very, very well. We've got some small ones, and we've got, for example, the Orillia Farmers' Market, a large farmers' market. But there are some challenges they face. Obviously, the Local Food Act—I give credit to the Premier. It's a nice, warm and cozy type of legislation. It doesn't really say an awful lot, except it gets a lot of debate.

One of the things I wanted to put on the record, though, is how can we help farmers more? Calling it a Local Food Act—I hope everyone would want to buy, and would buy, local food, whether it's at the farmers' market or at our produce stands. I know we've got Ego's up our way; we've got Hewitt's in Orillia. These are all people who sell really nutritious, good food. They're well-supported by our communities, and they're particularly well-supported by people who visit our communities, particularly in the summer months when they come to their cottages and love to go to the farmers' markets as well.

Just before lunch, I met with people in my riding, people from Simcoe county, and they're concerned—this is where I think the real concerns are—how good farmland is being just crushed with this Green Energy Act. I don't know how many have seen these solar farms. Whoever came up with the idea that we're only using class 6 and 7 farmland—it is such a misdemeanor to people to actually say. I can show you farms—I don't actually have the exact bushels per acre, but they're some of the best farmland you can imagine, because they've had proper tile drainage, proper fertilizer etc. Now they're covered in solar panels, with no accountability and no accountability to the local municipality. What really drives me crazy is why this House has twice now voted against bills that would give municipalities more power over where those bloody solar panels would go. They are sick. Some day, I think we're going to pay the price for it. We're already paying it with our hydro costs and special rates for people who have put these in. That's what the farmers are telling me. There's land that they could have bought and put into productivity, with wheat or corn or soybeans. They could have done that, and you know what? Right now they're covered in these metal solar panels. Someone, like the Samsungs of the world or the big energy companies, is making a lot of money out of this at the expense of all the people who are trying to, say, use the energy for their factories and they're finding that the energy costs are too high because of this. So, it has been a real mistake.

The same group talked to me about growth. We took the greenbelt, and all we've done is leapfrog it into Simcoe county. I'm going to tell you, it has been a mistake. We've got a place up in the Midhurst area, in Springwater township, where they want to put 22,000 more people in the secondary plan. Originally, the growth plan for Simcoe called for 6,000 people. Now the government has made an amendment that will allow 22,000 people. Guess where the people are going? Not in areas where there may be pine trees or some more rugged area; they're going right on the farmland. The best farmland you can imagine is going to be plowed under for sewers and water and townhouses. I tell you, it's completely irresponsible. The people up in our area, particularly the Simcoe County Federation of Agriculture, are adamantly opposed to this kind of nonsense. But, you know what? We're stuck with these guys. They've made these laws. They're making these amend-

ments. I have no idea who made the amendment to go ahead and give them 22,000 more people in one little township. It's almost like a favour is being paid to somebody, you know, for something they've done. I don't know. But it's not right, and we have to make changes.

I want to thank, first of all, the Premier for bringing the bill forward. It's a good topic to debate. But I want to pay special attention to some of our former Ministers of Agriculture, people I've worked with here: for example, Bill Stewart, Lorne Henderson, Helen Johns, Ernie Hardeman in the last term, and Noble Villeneuve—Noble Villeneuve was my favourite minister. I met him a number of times at ROMA. He was here before I became elected in 1999. I understand that his daughter, Roxane, is now our candidate up in that area. I've talked to her a few times. She's just like her dad. She's full of energy and enthusiasm and will make a great member when she arrives here at Queen's Park. I'm quite sure she will do excellent work and will be here after the next election.

With that, I've only got two minutes left, but I wanted to say, as we move forward with the Local Food Act, I thought that one thing that was really interesting today was the thought of an amendment by our education critic to actually make sure that this act had input from education. Who needs to be trained more than our young people? Young people from all political stripes and from all different ridings across Ontario should know in their schools about nutritious food, how to buy local food and how to support our economy by buying local food. So I applaud Lisa MacLeod for bringing that amendment forward. I hope that when we get to the committee hearings the government will listen to these kinds of amendments. The government says, "We want to get the bill passed; we want to get it into law." So let's make sure that we look at really, really good amendments at the same time as we move forward.

I also want to thank all my colleagues, particularly in my party, that have come from agricultural backgrounds and agricultural communities. I know that basically it's almost impossible to be an MPP in rural Ontario without being highly connected to fall fairs and all the different associations, whether it's the cattlemen's association, the hog producers, the chicken farmers or the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. We're all connected to those people on a regular basis. It's a group of people that I love to work with.

This year I've been fortunate enough that I've been able to work with another group of people I really enjoy working with, and that's all the people I'm working with to fight the College of Trades—all the tradespeople in Ontario. So I've had kind of a perfect year as far as being able to work with people, because we've been able to work with the people who do hard work and create jobs and create opportunities for people. Of course, the farmers are right in there.

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I've only got 20 seconds left, but I did want to say a special thank you to all the farmers in the riding of Simcoe North. In particular, I'm noticing a lot more