

Jerry J. Ouellette, MPP Oshawa

Signs of Spring

When I had the privilege and honour of serving as Ontario's Minister of Natural Resources I learned a great deal about our vast province.

Most may not realize that Ontario has one of the world's largest populations of polar bears with over 1,000 animals. Ontario is also home to beluga whales, narwhals, walruses, seals and a whole array of arctic wildlife, all along the Hudson-James Bay coastline.



Here in southern Ontario, the actual first true sign of spring is? No, it's not the robin as there are robins that summer in the Hudson-James Bay lowlands which migrate to Southern Ontario for the winter. Actually, this area is the northern range of the red-wing blackbird which entirely leaves this part of Ontario to head south for the winter; and is one of the first migrants to return in the spring. Now I know there are expert birders who may suggest that other species migrate earlier, but the red-wing blackbird is easily identified and popular enough to be around at locations where people go – and is a sure sign of spring.

Another indication of spring is the exposure of numerous potholes on our roads and highways. It is interesting to note there are sections of Highway 401 that average over 100,000 vehicles an hour usage, far more than its original design capacity. Engineers have had to rethink highway usage in Ontario and transport truck regulations are designed to protect the construction of our roads. You see, one improperly loaded truck can be equivalent to 100,000 standard vehicles. This is why a transport truck will utilize a number of different sets of wheels under the truck, to equally distribute the weight being carried and better maintain our roadways.

The provincial budget also signifies that spring is on its way. I must admit I do have concerns with the employment future for kids in the province of Ontario. The numbers working in the manufacturing sector grow fewer and fewer as globalization takes over. The access to cheaper and ever cheaper labour costs as well as the lack of guidelines to deal with our environment makes it difficult to compete. Even when our quality of products is second to none people are still willing to support foreign manufacturers. The end result is that we have fewer jobs available; and with the loss of over 150,000 manufacturing jobs our kids are looking elsewhere for employment. The current government has decided that taking funds through taxes from people and business in Ontario and then distributing those funds back to business is their path of choice. I am a believer that government's role is to create an environment which attracts business to come here to set up shop and produce here. If you look at the job statistics you will see a large percentage of the new jobs created in Ontario are actually "new government" jobs. Band aid, quick-fix plans may give the impression of assisting but won't help that our kids of today are working and supporting the Ontario of tomorrow. For this reason I have introduced a number of pieces of legislation, to help ensure a made-in-Ontario future for tomorrow.

I will continue to work on effective legislation and policy and make the best possible choices to secure future employment opportunities for the people of Ontario.

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerry J. Ouellette".

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