

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Government bill includes Jones? Respecting Private Property Act

Recently, the government of Ontario introduced the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act.

I am pleased that the government has incorporated part of my private member's bill, Bill 36 ? the Respecting Private Property Act, as part of the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act.

In 2009, there were 33,423 charges received under the Trespass to Property Act. Every year since, the number of charges has increased. More must be done to curb trespassing.

The Trespass to Property Act, as it's currently written, has a fine limit of \$2,000. This fails to discourage trespassing. There is also a limit on compensation for damages of \$1,000. This does not go far enough in providing fair compensation for property owners whose property is damaged due to trespassers. It is critical that we find a way to discourage trespassing on private property and create a system of fair compensation for individuals who experience damage on their property as a result of trespassing.

My private member's bill would have ensured property owners are fairly compensated for destruction to their property and would have helped deter trespassing. I am happy the government has included elements my private member's bill into the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. This new piece of legislation would make needed changes to the Trespass to Property Act by increasing the fine limit to \$10,000 and by removing the \$1,000 compensation limit.

Many of those who experience damage to their property are, not surprisingly, farmers. When their property is damaged, it impacts their livelihood. As an example, those who trespass on farmland can end up damaging fences, crops, and releasing livestock. This can quickly add up to thousands of dollars in damages. Increasing the ability to re-coup compensation for damages allows property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction of their property. And increasing the fine limit will teach individuals to be aware of their surrounding so not to trespass.

This bill, if passed, will also protect our unique local treasures like the Cheltenham badlands. This piece of legislation, along with the fence currently being erected, will protect this unique geological feature so future generations can enjoy it. In addition to tackling trespassing, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, if passed, will establish a classification system for trails in Ontario and the development of an Ontario trails strategy. There are thousands of trails across our province that people use to hike, bike and run on. Many are located here in Dufferin-Caledon. I am happy to see the promotion and further development of Ontario's trails that will enable everyone to observe and appreciate our local trail system.

