

Jones introduces bill to respect private property

The penalties for trespassing on private property could be increased, if Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones gets her way. Jones last week introduced a private member's bill, Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act. It amends the current Trespass to Property Act by creating a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing and increasing the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000.

Jones noted there is a growing concern across Ontario about the increase in trespassing on private property.

People who trespass on farmland for example, can end up damaging fencing, crops and livestock and other parts of the property, she said. This can quickly add up to thousands of dollars in damages.

The Respecting Private Property Act will make necessary changes to the Trespass to Private Property Act, Jones added. It will create a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing, and it will increase the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000.

Increasing the limit on compensation for damages allows property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction of their property, and a minimum fine will also send a message that trespassing is a serious issue and will not be taken lightly, she said. Jones observed that the current Trespass to Property Act has no minimum fine, and has a maximum limit of \$1,000 on compensation for damages.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) has been asking for amendments to the Trespass to Property Act, and is supportive of Bill 36.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is proud to support Sylvia Jones MPP's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, OFA Vice President Keith Currie stated. The OFA has been working with government and policy makers to amend the Trespass to Property Act for many years. We need this act updated to reflect the severity of trespassing and the damages that result from thoughtless or reckless behaviour.