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Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills

Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Keeping Polystyrene Out of Ontario's Lakes and Rivers Act, 2021

Loi de 2021 sur la prévention de la pollution des lacs et des rivières de l'Ontario par le polystyrène

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Monday 22 March 2021

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42e législature

Lundi 22 mars 2021

Chair: Logan Kanapathi
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Président : Logan Kanapathi
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES RÈGLEMENTS ET DES PROJETS DE LOI D'INTÉRÊT PRIVÉ

Monday 22 March 2021

Lundi 22 mars 2021

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1 and by video conference.

KEEPING POLYSTYRENE OUT OF ONTARIO'S LAKES AND RIVERS ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DE LA POLLUTION DES LACS ET DES RIVIÈRES DE L'ONTARIO PAR LE POLYSTYRÈNE

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 228, An Act to prohibit unencapsulated expanded or extruded polystyrene in floating docks, floating platforms and buoys / Projet de loi 228, Loi interdisant le polystyrène expansé ou extrudé sans enveloppe de protection dans les quais flottants, les plateformes flottantes et les bouées.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills has now come to order. We are here for public hearings on Bill 228, An Act to prohibit unencapsulated expanded or extruded polystyrene in floating docks, floating platforms and buoys.

We have the following member in the room, MPP Billy Pang; and the following members participating remotely: MPP Will Bouma, MPP Paul Miller, MPP Dave Smith, MPP Daisy Wai, MPP Jamie West, MPP Norman Miller and MPP Jeremy Roberts. Did I miss anyone? No? Thank you.

We're also joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording. Please speak slowly and clearly and wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Please take a brief pause before speaking, and, as always, all comments should go through the Chair, please.

MR. NORMAN MILLER

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Are there any questions before we begin? There's a point of order from MPP Dave Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Just on a point of order: Today is the 20th anniversary of MPP Norman Miller coming to the Legislature. I wanted to acknowledge that this is a special day, because we are dealing with one of his private member's bills on the anniversary of his joining the Legislature 20 years ago today.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Congratulations. So it is appropriate that you're the first presenter today as the sponsor of Bill 228, member for Parry Sound–Muskoka MPP Norman Miller. You will have 15 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 45 minutes for questions and answers, divided into three rounds of six minutes for the government members, three rounds of six minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent members.

MPP Norman Miller, please go ahead.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, MPP Smith. Somebody must have whispered in your ear about that, I suspect.

My presentation might be a little bit longer than 15 minutes, so I wonder if the government minds, if I do go a couple of minutes longer, if I can use a bit of their time. Is that okay, government members? I think they're nodding, Chair—and depending on how technology works for me as well.

It's a great pleasure and an honour to be here to present to my private member's bill, Bill 228, the Keeping Polystyrene Out of Ontario's Lakes and Rivers Act. As you probably know, my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka sits on the east side of Georgian Bay. The riding boundary in the north is the French River, in the south it's the Severn River, and within my riding there are hundreds of lakes.

Georgian Bay is part of Lake Huron and the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes hold roughly one fifth of the world's fresh water and provide drinking water to 40 million people in Canada and the United States. We need to protect that water, and yet, right now, many people are intentionally putting something in the water that causes pollution. This is open expanded or extruded polystyrene Styrofoam used as flotation for floating docks and rafts.

This is a situation where I really believe a picture is worth a thousand words, so at this point I'm going to try to share my screen so that I can use some of those pictures. I will now attempt to use technology here. I'm just trying to get the right view for everybody. There. Okay, good.

So this first picture is actually taken very nearby, where I live, just along the shoreline. It's a pretty common sight. You can see there are millions of little—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Norman Miller, excuse me. Nothing is showing on the screen, MPP Miller.

Mr. Norman Miller: Oh, sorry. It's not showing?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): No.

Mr. Norman Miller: Oh, jeez. Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Please try one more time.

Mr. Norman Miller: Okay. Is that showing?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Yes.

Mr. Norman Miller: Okay. Now I'll try to get back to that view.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Please go ahead.

Mr. Norman Miller: Yes, okay. I'll just use this view, even though it's not—everybody can see it bigger now?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Yes, we can see it bigger.

Mr. Norman Miller: Okay. Good. That first picture is just nearby here. You can see all the little wee bits of white and blue Styrofoam. That's pretty common along the coasts of Georgian Bay, certainly in the Parry Sound area, and it's very small, fine pieces.

This is the bottom of a dock that's built with unencapsulated Styrofoam. There would be some strapping on that as well, but basically it's exposed like that, and docks have been built like that for decades now. A few decades ago, white expanded polystyrene was the standard. This is the stuff that inexpensive coolers are made of—little white beads stuck together—but this eventually absorbs water and, as any one of us who has ever had one of those coolers can attest, it breaks apart very easily.

Over time, most people move to extruded polystyrene like this. It is usually coloured light blue or pink. This is still commonly sold as dock flotation. This does last longer and doesn't break apart as easily as expanded polystyrene, but now that these billets have been in service for a while, we know that they do break up. We're seeing more and more pieces floating in our waterways.

You also see a lot of this around the Great Lakes, around Georgian Bay, where docks have broken away. It's typical that they're frozen in the ice in the wintertime, water levels go up and down, and they get abandoned or just break away. This is after a few years, and this photo came from the Bayfield-Nares Islanders' Association.

This photo, again, is supplied by Andy Myers, who collected all these pieces of dock foam last August in a bay off Georgian Bay. This picture was from the Georgian Bay Forever website, from their collection day, and this picture was sent by Luc Voorn and shows large chunks of both expanded and extruded polystyrene that were collected by a cottage group near the South Channel, near Parry Sound.

The big chunks are relatively easy to collect and clean up, but you get animals making homes in the Styrofoam. You get birds eating bits of them and you end up with many, many little wee pieces of Styrofoam. These small pieces are almost impossible to clean up. One person who wrote in support of this bill, Christopher Lewis, described it very well. This is his letter: "Having collected many pieces of this polystyrene each spring and throughout the course of the summer, I find the continued use of this material very troubling. It breaks down into tiny pieces that can't be recovered except by using a vacuum—an impossible prospect."

0910

This close-up picture is from the Bayfield-Nares Islanders' Association website, while the picture that shows the line of pieces of blue foam along the shore comes from the Georgian Bay Association website.

These small bits might be almost impossible to clean up, but many organizations are trying. The Ontario government has supported a project by the Council of the Great Lakes Region, Pollution Probe, Boating Ontario and the University of Toronto to install Seabins—that's what you see, that yellow thing in the water—and LittaTraps at marinas to try to recapture some of the waste that is in our lakes and rivers.

Last fall, I visited Point Pleasant Marina in Parry Sound, where one of the Seabins is installed. That's Drew Lichtenheldt in the picture. He talked about why it was important to him to help protect Georgian Bay at Point Pleasant Marina. At Point Pleasant Marina, just as a note of interest, they use steel pontoons because they last well and don't break down in the water, and they can be fully recycled when they reach the end of their life, which is about 25 years in that case. Drew told me that the Seabin at their marina collects about eight pounds of waste each day, including plastics, oil and other floating debris. Projects like this are great, but this is a case where prevention is the best medicine. It's so much easier to prevent this than it is to clean it up.

I think this is a great photo. It shows our wildlife pecking away and eating, and creating all those little bits of Styrofoam that end up in fish and all kinds of other wildlife.

I hope by now I've convinced you that the use of unencapsulated polystyrene foam in our lakes and rivers is bad. You may be asking, what are the alternatives? Well, you can build docks, as in this photo here, from hard plastic pontoons or, if you're a do-it-yourselfer, with barrels, and there are other types of plastic products that are more protected.

In fact, there are a lot of the manufacturers that are located around, certainly in my riding. That picture is NyDock, which is based in Huntsville, and there's Kropf Industrial in Parry Sound that makes both metal and plastic pontoon docks, and Dock Kings in Parry Sound. I believe there's a modular plastic docking system called Jetfloat docks, which is at Grand Bend. And as I said, if you're a do-it-yourselfer, you could use barrels or polystyrene that's enclosed in a plastic case.

Interestingly enough, the Connecticut River Conservancy in the US is also promoting moving away from dock foam, and they did a cost analysis that basically shows that in the case of the docks like the Styrofoam and steel, they last much longer and the cost is, over the longer term, pretty similar, and with some of the cheaper alternatives there are ways of building a dock without increasing the

cost. In the case of some of those hard plastic pontoons, they last up to 99 years, or their warranty is for 99 years.

I'm going to try to stop sharing because that's the end of the slide show.

I want to take a moment here to point out that many of the marinas and their associations and Boating Ontario are working hard to be good stewards of our water. Boating Ontario has developed environmental standards for marinas to follow to reduce and prevent water, air and land pollution associated with recreational boating in Ontario.

Later today, you're going to hear from a marina owner who is also very concerned about the environment, Andy Blenkarn. I wanted to highlight this because some people seem to believe that businesses cannot be environmental leaders. Marinas around Ontario are a good example of how business owners can also be environmental leaders.

Many individual property owners are also working to be good stewards of the water. They are the people who volunteer to collect the garbage, either individually or with organizations like Georgian Bay Forever. In 2019, volunteers with Georgian Bay Forever conducting a cleanup of the Georgian Bay shoreline collected an estimated 5,000 pieces of dock foam, far more than any other kind of litter.

These same individuals wrote in support of this bill. I believe more than 32 members of the Legislature received at least one letter from a constituent with regard to this issue. We heard from so many people because dock foam has become, as you can see from those pictures, one of the biggest pollutants in large bodies of water like Georgian Bay.

I believe government needs to support those efforts by individuals, businesses and environmental groups, and that is why in an effort to reduce the waste and pollutants in Ontario's waterways, Bill 228 is proposing that all expanded or extruded polystyrene used as flotation in new docks, other floating platforms and buoys be fully encapsulated to prevent it from breaking up and polluting the waters.

This measure has been adopted in several other jurisdictions, including Oregon, Washington State and Arkansas. Additionally, the US Army Corps of Engineers has prohibited the use of unencapsulated polystyrene foam in dock billets for more than 10 years.

Today, you're going to hear from Georgian Bay Forever, the Georgian Bay Association and the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Association, all of whom have indicated their support for this bill.

Georgian Bay Forever has been doing significant research on this issue. They have a paper entitled Problems with Polystyrene Foam: Environmental Fate and Effects in the Great Lakes. They will tell you more about the damages caused by dock foam including by the chemicals that can leach out of foam into the water. The author of that report, Lisa Erdle, will be here today to answer your questions far better than I can about why unencapsulated dock foam is bad for our lakes. Lisa is a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto.

You'll also hear from the Georgian Bay Association, which has been working with Georgian Bay Forever to promote moving away from dock foam.

The Georgian Bay Land Trust won't be presenting today, but I do want to quote from a letter they sent in support of this bill:

"As an environmental organization, we are well aware of the massive pollution created by dock foam along our shores and coastline. We are constantly removing minute, small and large pieces of dock foam from the windward shores of our properties throughout the season. Our and the Georgian Bay community's efforts cannot keep pace with the rate of dock foam pollution. Bill 228 effectively addresses such pollution at its source."

The township of The Archipelago has also been advocating to have something done about dock foam. You will hear from Reeve Bert Liverance this afternoon. Bert and some of his council members met with Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks Jeff Yurek about this very issue and with AMO last summer, and their council passed a resolution in support of this bill. Mayor Peter Koetsier of Georgian Bay township is also scheduled to present.

These two townships include a huge amount of the shoreline of Georgian Bay and the 30,000 islands. For any of you who have not visited the area, I strongly encourage you to do so. This is the area that inspired artists like the Group of Seven's Frederick Varley. It is a rugged landscape filled with small windswept islands.

We have heard mostly from people who have had a connection to Georgian Bay, this is an issue all around the Great Lakes and elsewhere across Ontario. Marlaine Koehler wrote to express the support of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, which is the organization that oversees the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail which connects 155 communities, from South Glengarry to Prince township, on Lake Superior. She wrote:

"Bill 228 represents a step towards achieving healthy waters and protecting aquatic ecosystems. If adopted, it will limit microplastic pollution by requiring all new dock floats and buoys made from expanded or extruded polystyrene, also known as Styrofoam, to be fully encapsulated to prevent the foam from breaking down and entering the waterway ecosystems, which is harmful to both wildlife and humans.

"We have a responsibility to do more than talk the talk when it comes to the environment. Mr. Miller's Bill 228 is an achievable measure forward that will help us do better by the waters we all love so much and on which our economy and well-being depend."

Mike McKay, PhD, executive director and professor at Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research at the University of Windsor said, "I am supportive of commonsense actions like this that help ensure the integrity and health of our fresh water resources"—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, MPP Norman Miller. Sorry to cut you off. Your time is up, and thank you for your presentation and opening statement.

Now we are moving into questions and answers, starting with the government side. You have six minutes for your questions and answers. MPP Dave Smith.

0920

Mr. Dave Smith: MPP Miller, I don't think you were finished your presentation. Could you continue on for us, please?

Mr. Norman Miller: I appreciate that, MPP Smith. Hopefully, it won't be too much longer.

I've recently taken part in a couple of meetings of the Great Lakes Commission, and I know that water quality and microplastic pollution are on the agenda of the states we share the Great Lakes resources with. But this issue reaches beyond the Great Lakes. We will hear from Terry Rees, executive director of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations. FOCA represents more than 500 community groups from all across the province.

Online you can find a petition against the unencapsulated Styrofoam billets to be banned. The petition was created two years ago by Darek Dawda, who cottages in Lake of the Woods area, and has been signed by 490 people. In his petition, he describes the problem: "These Styrofoam billets are frequently chewed up by animals, such as muskrats and beavers that like making their nests in them." In case anyone has doubts that animals would really chew up dock foam, during second reading of debate on this bill, our friend Madame Gélinas told us about this exact thing happening.

Back to Mr. Dawda's petition: He writes, "This results in significant Styrofoam pollution in our lakes and rivers, which with time turns into microplastic pollution that ends up in our drinking water and food supply. At times, you can see a parade of Styrofoam chunks across the water. At other times, the shoreline has a blue streak outlining it. Our water, needless to say, is our most precious resource, and we need to protect it from needless pollution, especially since alternative safe technology of enclosed billets is readily available."

The bill has also received the support of Dr. Norman Yan. Dr. Yan is a respected biologist who has written extensively about protecting our lakes and who is chair of the Friends of the Muskoka Watershed. He writes, "Given that fragmentation of extruded polystyrene into small particles can lead to the uptake of polystyrene nanoparticles that are a threat to aquatic life including fish ... its encapsulation during dock, floating platform or buoy manufacture or assembly makes perfect sense to lower the threat to aquatic ecosystems that microplastic pollution may represent."

Finally, let's take a moment to look beyond our borders and our coastlines. We've all heard about the amount of plastic waste that's going into the world's oceans. Of course, anything that's floating in the Great Lakes will eventually wash out into the ocean. This bill is one simple thing we can do to reduce the amount of plastic that Ontario is adding to the problem of plastic in our oceans.

Thank you for your time this morning. I look forward to answering your questions about this initiative to reduce plastic pollution in our waterways, and to the discussion with the presenters this afternoon.

Thank you for allowing me to get that complete presentation in, government members.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): A question from MPP Billy Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: Mr. Miller, I can see a lot of presenters are from Georgian Bay. Is it a local issue or is it happening elsewhere in the province?

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you for the question, MPP Pang. Yes, it certainly is a problem in Georgian Bay, so that's probably why I am so aware of it, but it's also a problem all around the Great Lakes. As I just mentioned, there's a petition way up in the northwest of Ontario in the Kenora and Lake of the Woods area also requesting that dock foam be encapsulated. And when Madame Gélinas made her presentation from the Sudbury area, she noted that lakes like Long Lake and I think it was Lake Panache and other lakes that use floating docks—that the stewardship councils there in that area were very supportive of the bill. They have problems with—she specifically mentioned that muskrat love to make homes in the foam, dig it out and make a home and then you have little bits, obviously, coming out of that.

So it's right across the province, more so in lakes that rely on floating docks, and certainly the Great Lakes. Georgian Bay does because the water levels fluctuate so much that pretty much floating docks are 95% of the docks on Georgian Bay and the Great Lakes.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Daisy Wai, please go ahead.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: First of all, I'd like to congratulate MPP Miller for having served for over 20 years. My question for you, quickly, is: Have you discussed this with the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, and if so, is he supporting this?

Mr. Norman Miller: MPP Wai, it seems to me hard to believe that it's been 20 years. It's gone by very quickly, that's for sure. Thank you for your congratulations.

Yes, I have discussed it with the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Mr. Yurek. In fact, I think it was at the ROMA conference, one of the municipalities in the open forum asked him a specific question about the bill and whether he supported the bill, and in his response to the question from the municipality, he did indicate that he supports the private member's bill, so I'm happy about that.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): We have 17 seconds left. Anyone want to make any questions or comments from the government side? None.

We are moving to the opposition side. MPP Paul Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: MPP Miller—not me, the other Miller—it's an excellent bill, Norm. I'm very happy with this direction you're heading.

I guess I've got a couple of questions. You've pointed out through your pictures some of the damage that's been done over the last 30 years. How do you hope to alleviate the stuff that's already there to work in conjunction with the new bill? My concern, as usual, would be enforcement. If people don't capitulate, are there going to be fines? How are you going to go about cleaning up the mess that's already there, other than collecting it in cans and nets? Because, as was mentioned, the microscopic stuff is the

stuff that gets in the drinking water, and certainly that's going to have a negative impact on people's health. That's one of my main concerns.

I know the filtration plants, even in Hamilton, even the advanced one we just put in, can't take some of that stuff out of the water, and there are lots of chemicals in the water too that—900 degrees Celsius is their burn off it, so these plants can't take out those types of things.

As you know, we had a major project in Hamilton. We encapsulated a large part of the bay because we had tar from the steel plants. They've done a fairly good job on that. We've even had—some wildlife we haven't seen in the last 50 years are coming back, so that's a good thing.

There will be absolutely no opposition to this bill, from what I can see, from the NDP. We're fully supportive, as far as I would see. I'm not the environment critic, but I'm sure they would be really pleased with what you're doing.

I'd like to see more of it, Norm, because there are lots of other things in our waterways that should be removed. I hope this is just the start of a good thing.

Maybe Jamie would like to say a few things.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Jamie West.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, MPP Miller. Norm, were you replying? I saw your mouth moving, if you wanted the opportunity to reply.

Mr. Norman Miller: Yes, sorry, I didn't realize I wasn't unmuted. He had about four questions there, so I thought I'd try to address some of them. If I miss any of them, Jamie, you can follow up and set me straight.

First of all, congratulations on the work you're doing around Hamilton Harbour there to clean things up and get wildlife back.

You asked about what we do to clean up. I think we certainly will rely on a lot of the organizations that take it upon themselves now—we'll hear from some of them this afternoon—and about all the efforts they've taken to clean up more the big chunks. The smaller ones are the—even those little bits along the shoreline, not even getting the microscopic, are really tricky to clean up because it's mixed in, as you saw from the photos, with all kinds of sand and debris etc. So it is very challenging to clean that part up.

0930

The whole idea of this bill, because it's so hard to clean up, is to stop it at the source, so that if we no longer have unencapsulated foam, eventually we're going to have much cleaner shores and much less plastic in our waterways.

You asked about enforcement. I'm not so concerned about enforcement, but I think enforcement needs to happen where it's manufactured and sold. I think that a dock manufacturer, whether it be—in my area, I know some of ones around here, like Dock Kings or Kropf Industrial or NyDock in Huntsville. When they know it's the law of the province that unencapsulated foam is illegal, then those companies are not going produce it. They're not going to sell it.

I don't see it as being a huge challenge, but I think the place to do enforcement is at the source, at the manufacturers and the retail outlets. It's pretty easy to go to Rona here in Parry Sound, and currently, right now, about half their docks are unencapsulated and the others are encapsulated. There's no hiding it, that's for sure. It's pretty easy to see.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Jamie West, you have one minute and 13 seconds left.

Mr. Jamie West: Just very briefly, congratulations, as well, MPP Miller, on your anniversary. I heard the expression, after I was elected, from one of the security guards, who said, "Long days, short years," so it's good to see that you're a reflection of that.

I was wondering, in term of encapsulation, do you have something in mind? Can someone just spray it with a bond or do you want them in plastic or in a container? What do you see as encapsulating?

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you for the congratulations, Jamie, and thank you for the question. Yes, when I think of encapsulation, the most common way that it's encapsulated is actually in a hard plastic rectangular or square kind of box. You do see that even on some of the docks, some of the bigger docks that are using the hard either steel or plastic pontoons, they will often have a box with encapsulated foam in it to add a little more stability to the dock.

So that's what I think of, but it may evolve over time. I think it almost needs to be in regulations so that it can be flexible as technology changes. We will hear today, I think, from some people that are in the dock building and repairing business as well. Those would be really good questions for them this afternoon as—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, MPP Miller.

Now, we are going back to the government side. MPP Dave Smith, please go ahead.

Mr. Dave Smith: Before I get into it, Norm, if you want to finish off your answer that you were giving to Jamie, I'd appreciate that, and then I'll ask another question of you.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thanks, Dave. I think I was finished my answer.

Mr. Dave Smith: Okay. My question to you, then, is, why are you focusing on just docks? Styrofoam is something that is in the environment in a lot of other places. Why in particular docks?

Mr. Norman Miller: It's concrete action that we can take that will have a very clear, definite benefit, and it's a widespread problem, as I think we'll hear this afternoon. But there are, of course, other initiatives to reduce plastic in the country. The federal government has a ban on single-use plastics, I believe, that's coming up.

In a former private member's bill, I had product stewardship bill way back in 2005, with full end responsibility for production of waste to whoever produces it. That's an initiative our government is in the process of implementing now, where if you produce the waste, you're responsible for the full life cycle of it.

So, yes, there are lots of other things that can and should be done and are happening, but this is a very particular problem with a clear and I believe simple solution that will make a real difference.

Mr. Dave Smith: Switching to some other material that is buoyant, that's going to float the dock—I've talked to a few dock manufacturers in my own riding about it. What they have said to me is that the extruded and expanded Styrofoam does break down over time, and it breaks down quicker than some of the other products that they can use as floats for docks. Should we be embarking on an education process with people, as well, to talk about the total cost of ownership over the length of the lifespan of the actual dock and demonstrate that it is actually cheaper to go with one of the other materials rather than with Styrofoam that you have to replace every once in a while and break down the dock to do it?

Mr. Norman Miller: Yes, I'd certainly believe, MPP Smith, that education is an important part of this. As that study—I didn't read the whole thing—from the States showed, there are inexpensive alternatives, too. If you're building a very small dock on a small river, you can use barrels that are $50 a barrel. You can use half a dozen of those to build a dock that doesn't have any Styrofoam in it. That's sort of a do-it-yourself cheap alternative.

But then again, the docks like one built by Kropf Industrial in Parry Sound use either steel—and as I mentioned in my presentation, the Point Pleasant Marina owner, who's very environmentally aware and concerned, uses steel because it only has a 25-year life, but it's a very substantial dock for use in a marina with big boats etc., and it is totally recyclable, the wood and the steel.

In terms of the hard plastic that Kropf Industrial uses, I believe the warranty is 99 years on it. I guess I won't be around to see whether it does actually last 99 years, but if somebody is willing to warrant that, hopefully it does, and over the course of that period you'd have to replace the deck etc. There's a whole aluminum structure underneath for strength etc., but it has a substantial lifetime to it for sure.

So I think you have to look at the full length of ownership and cost of ownership. As I say, there are some studies in the States showing that there are inexpensive alternatives, and then also weighing how long the dock is in service makes a big difference, too.

Mr. Dave Smith: Do you think that we should be doing something retroactive to remove the existing docks, then, that are using Styrofoam?

Mr. Norman Miller: No, I don't think so. We look at it going forward, but I think that perhaps should be consideration—and we're here; it would be a good question for some of the companies that work and do retrofits etc. because I think we'll hear from them that they feel that you should address—if somebody has an old dock where the structure is okay and they want to replace billets, the billets then should be covered by this. We'll have some people you can ask that question to this afternoon who will give you an on-the-ground response based on what they actually do.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you. I don't have anything else.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Will Bouma, please go ahead.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Chair. Through you: Thanks, Norm. Congratulations—sorry; MPP Miller. It's great for you to bring this forward.

You've mentioned this before. You said earlier that people are still selling the foam docks as they are, and that's what I wanted to ask about: the necessity for this legislation. Because you've also said that so many people get it, they've changed manufacturing and so many others have, but it seems to me that the only way to really eliminate this is to have a bill like this in place.

I was wondering if you could expand a little bit more on the necessity of this legislation because people are still manufacturing docks the old-fashioned way.

Mr. Norman Miller: If you go to some lumberyards—not Home Depot per se, but a company like that—where they have docks piled up, probably half the docks will be unencapsulated Styrofoam because it is cheaper to manufacture than to encapsulate it. No question about it, and there are people who are often just looking for the absolute cheapest—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, MPP Norm Miller.

Now we are going back to the opposition side. MPP Paul Miller, please go ahead.

Mr. Paul Miller: Norm, a couple of questions for you: You said you're going to the source, and that's a good thing to do. Obviously the manufacturing side of it—if you can shut down the problem there, it's good, but I still have some concerns about the existing docks that are still out there on properties. Could not the government, in some way, shape or form, assist cottagers and townspeople and the people who are in the vicinity that you represent? Could not the government help them in some way, from tax write-offs or financially, to address their own particular dock that may be one of the contributors to this problem?

I don't believe that cutting it off at the source is the only solution, I think you have to move beyond that. Because there could be docks that have only been in there five years, and 10 or 15 years from now they'll start breaking apart, so it kind of eliminates some of the effort that you're trying to put forward. I think you have to deal with that end of it too. I don't see that in the bill, and I'm hoping that you are moving in that direction. If not, I don't think it's self-defeating, but it's certainly a major problem.

0940

Now, we're not talking—like you said earlier, and I'll reiterate: It's not just Georgian Bay, it's the whole country. It's everywhere that they have docks. This bill I hope pops up in every territory and every province in this country to deal with this situation. This is the breaking of the iceberg. You're chipping away at the iceberg and it's a good start, but I believe there's still so much out there that will continue to be a problem because it's not being addressed. I don't know what you have to say about that but I'd like

to see if you've got any thoughts on dealing with the existing problem as well as dealing with the manufacturer.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, MPP Miller. Those are some good suggestions. I think there's nothing that precludes the government from taking additional action to deal with existing situations that are out there. One of the images in my presentation I showed was of a dock just floating around abandoned in a bay. I think that's not an uncommon scenario, certainly along the Great Lakes coast, where docks have just been abandoned. Perhaps there's room for some sort of program run by the government that deals with trying to collect all these abandoned docks. I'd certainly be open to that. It's a good suggestion.

I think there will be one presenter this afternoon, MPP Miller, that I know in his correspondence specifically mentioned that and raised other questions of other things to do. That was Gary French, who I believe is presenting this afternoon. It would be a good thing to ask him a few questions about that too, when you get the opportunity when he's presenting.

I don't think this bill precludes the government from taking further actions to deal with the existing problem, but this obviously addresses pollution into the future.

Mr. Paul Miller: Jamie, have you got any questions?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Jamie West.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, Chair, and MPP Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka. When MPP Miller, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, was talking about replacing older docks, I was just wondering your thoughts, especially because of your riding—how do we make people aware? Let's say somebody proactively wants to change their dock to a better system or their dock is eroding and they want to bring in encapsulated polystyrene. How do we make people aware of what to do with the old ones? Because there are a lot of areas where they'll just throw it off to the side somewhere, especially in northern Ontario, where you have a lot of land and you can put it into the pile of "one day we'll bring this to the dump." How do we make people aware of the problem of this slowly eroding and blowing into the woods and eventually blowing back into the river again?

Mr. Norman Miller: Good point, MPP West. I think it's certainly through education. I think lots of the campers and cottagers are members of small, local cottage associations, so that would be a great opportunity. We're going to hear from FOCA this afternoon, the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, I believe it is, which represents thousands and thousands of homeowners and cottage owners. I would think using those various organizations to communicate would be a first step for sure, both the very small local associations that tend to have meetings and publications etc., but then into bigger associations as well. I know around here there's the Georgian Bay Association, which represents the whole Georgian Bay coast. You have Georgian Bay Forever, which is an environmental group—and through other environmental groups as well, groups like Pollution Probe, which is supportive of the bill, or perhaps Environmental Defence. That kind of organization would also help try to educate, and certainly government as well. Government could help try to educate. I think that's an important component going forward in trying to deal with the old docks and to make people realize the problems that are caused by unencapsulated Styrofoam being used in docks.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Now we will move to the government side, the government members. MPP Will Bouma, please go ahead.

Mr. Will Bouma: Chair, through you: MPP Miller, it seems to me that you have a very strong record of taking on some environmental projects. I've heard of the one that you did with the deposit system for liquor bottles, the first bill to create a system of producer responsibility and a bill to require coffee pods to be compostable. I was just wondering, why do you take such a focused approach to some very small things? And in this case, why just dock foam and not something like Styrofoam in general? Because you had mentioned earlier the coolers that tend to break down. Why not go bigger? In your view, why is this a better approach, just to take one thing at a time like this?

Mr. Norman Miller: MPP Bouma, as I mentioned, the product stewardship bill I did back in 2005 was pretty broad in that it was all types of materials. But I think there's something to be said for something that's a clear action that achieves an outcome that is positive, and people can understand that as well.

One of the bills I probably got more buy-in and support for, of the environmental bills I've done, was the requirement that single-use coffee pods be compostable. That actually came out from a problem in the riding, again. I had met with Muskoka Roastery. They were using this product invented in Ontario in conjunction with the University of Guelph, a certified compostable coffee pod that you could use in your popular single-use coffeemaker, and then if you have a means of putting it in the compost, you just throw the whole thing into the compost. It's very simple, easy. And it would completely disappear in short order.

But they were having a problem where it wasn't being accepted by municipal systems, so my solution to that was to come up with a private member's bill that would require all coffee pods to be certified compostable. The government has picked up on that. It has worked that into the system now. But that came from very much a specific issue in the riding—as this bill does, really. It's from seeing a problem and hearing about a problem in the area and taking a concrete and, I think, very workable solution to make a difference with it.

I hope that answers your question.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Any questions or comments from the government side? MPP Billy Pang, please go ahead.

Mr. Billy Pang: MPP Miller, thanks again for your heart to protect the environment.

The federal government already announced that they will ban single-use Styrofoam containers, so why do you still need to do this?

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, MPP Pang. I think their legislation wouldn't be dealing with this issue of dock foam. It's another separate issue of single-use Styrofoam containers. But it wouldn't apply to dock foam, so this is a different but related issue, I guess you could say.

I think with the passing of this bill, it will make a real difference on the amount of plastics we see in our Great Lakes, certainly in Georgian Bay and a lot of the other lakes that rely on floating docks. I think it's an action we can take that will have a real benefit. It's pretty simple to do. As I say, there are other alternatives to this. We don't need to be using a dock that is detrimental to the environment, to our wildlife and to ourselves, as we eat things that eat the plastic, like fish. I think it's just a common-sense, simple thing that we can do that will make our waters cleaner going forward.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Daisy Wai, please go ahead.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I am thankful that we're doing something to our water. But if people, some of us, are not near the water, it doesn't seem to be such a big problem. Why would you believe it is so important that we do something about this issue now?

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, MPP Wai. As I started out in my presentation, I'm on Georgian Bay, part of Lake Huron on the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes is the water system for 40 million people in Canada and the United States, so I think it's pretty important that we keep that water as pure as possible for the benefit of all of us. And then, of course, there are all the smaller lakes around, certainly lots in MPP West's area, in the Sudbury area.

0950

I think we all recognize that the quality of our water is paramount. This simple action will make a difference in keeping our drinking water cleaner, keeping our environment cleaner. That's why I believe it to be important, MPP Wai.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Now we are moving back to the official opposition members. MPP Jamie West, please go ahead.

Mr. Jamie West: I just want to echo on that: I think it is important. My riding is only part of the city of Greater Sudbury, but the city of Greater Sudbury has 330 lakes, with all sorts of docks from all different years. One of the things I was thinking about, MPP Miller, was, when you go out fishing or you just go out for a boat ride, you notice some of the older waterfronts where maybe people aren't going as often or maybe they're just not going up to the dock as often, and the boathouses are starting to rot away and the docks are getting pretty beat-up looking.

I think it's a great initiative. I'm sort of running out of questions, to be honest, because I think in terms of a bill, this captures what you want to do. You want to fix it going forward. I think there's room to fix what happened in the past as well, but I think the target of the bill basically is, how do we prevent this from getting worse, and I think you captured that as well.

I don't know if there's anything you just want to bring up, MPP Miller, that we haven't discussed, or anything that you want to underscore that is worth saying again.

Mr. Norman Miller: Well, thank you, MPP West. I think, certainly, the issue you bring up of the older docks is one that does need to be addressed. I think it will be interesting this afternoon, with some of the folks that are presenting, to ask them about that issue as well, to see if they have any solutions. Thoughts about solutions would be great. We might learn a good solution this afternoon for that issue, and also find out—I'm gathering, from what you're saying, that there seems to be a pretty widespread issue of older docks that are just kind of abandoned, or properties that aren't used that much in more northern Ontario. I think that's one that we can delve a little deeper into, both this afternoon and with some of the presenters who will be coming before the committee in this afternoon's proceedings, and see about how we might tackle that one.

Mr. Jamie West: I have nothing further, Chair. Like I said earlier, I think MPP Miller's bill is doing exactly what it's targeted to do. We could have a good discussion about what else could be done, but I really feel like he's answered, in these different rounds of questions, all the questions I would have had on it. So thank you again, MPP Miller.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Paul Miller, please go ahead.

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, just a final question, Norm. Obviously, water runs to the oceans from the rivers and the lakes, and so anywhere in Ontario, north-south will have an impact on the southern areas. The other MPP mentioned that she's in Toronto, so why would it affect her? Well, all the water flows through the Great Lakes system to the St. Lawrence to the ocean, so any place in Ontario where the source comes from is a place to attack it at the source and eliminate some of the problems.

Of course, it also protects the First Nations. They've had all kinds of problems with drinking water, and this is just another addition to their drinking water. If it wasn't mercury, it's Styrofoam and things like this that are in the water.

Anything to protect the water is a smart thing to do. We should have done it 50 years ago, but it's never too late to improve the situation. So I commend you on your bill, and you have full support from the NDP on this legislation.

Mr. Norman Miller: Well, thank you, MPP Miller, and thank you also for bringing up First Nations as well. In the riding I represent, there are seven First Nations, all that are located on water. I guess Wahta is inland, on a smaller waterway. But most are right along the coast of Georgian Bay, and all are on the water we're talking about, that's affected by this plastic in the water—so excellent point made there.

Thank you, everyone, for all your questions. I look forward to this afternoon where we should have some really interesting presenters, some with a real science background, others that are involved in building docks and selling docks and retrofitting docks, municipalities that are

just concerned about the issue, and environmental organizations. I think it should be a good afternoon this afternoon, and I thank you for all your support.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you for your presentation and questions and answers. The committee is now in recess until 1 p.m.

The committee recessed from 0955 to 1300.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Good afternoon. We will now resume the public hearings on Bill 228, An Act to prohibit unencapsulated expanded or extruded polystyrene in floating docks, floating platforms and buoys.

Our remaining presenters today have been grouped in threes for each one-hour time slot. Each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation. After we have heard from all three presenters, the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will be for questions from members of the committee. This time for questions will be broken down into two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the official opposition and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent members as a group. Are there any questions, to the members?

Seeing none, I see that MPP Vincent Ke joined the meeting. Please confirm you are an MPP and you are currently in Ontario.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I'm the MPP from Don Valley North. I am now in Queen's Park. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you for being here.

GEORGIAN BAY FOREVER

TOWNSHIP OF THE ARCHIPELAGO

MR. GARY FRENCH

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): I will now call on our first presenter, Georgian Bay Forever. Please go ahead and please say your name and your organization for the record.

Ms. Heather Sargeant: My name is Heather Sargeant. You can see that "Shannon Farquharson" is showing up as my name. That is not correct. I cannot fix that at the moment, but I am Heather Sargeant, and I am prepared to present for Georgian Bay Forever.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Please go ahead. Please start your presentation.

Ms. Heather Sargeant: Good afternoon. My name is Heather Sargeant, and I'm the communications director for Georgian Bay Forever, a charity that is dedicated to scientific research and public education on Georgian Bay's aquatic ecosystem. I am here with David Sweetnam, our executive director, and Lisa Erdle, a PhD candidate from the University of Toronto. We are here to support Bill 228 as an important step to reduce pollution in the Great Lakes.

As you know, the Great Lakes, including Georgian Bay, are enjoyed by millions of residents and visitors. The lakes provide safe drinking water to more than 70% of Ontarians and their watersheds are home to more than 4,000 species of fish, birds and other living things.

Plastic pollution is a threat to the Great Lakes. This presentation today focuses on one type of that plastic pollution, polystyrene foam, and targets one source, unencapsulated polystyrene foam used in docks and floats.

What is polystyrene and where does this pollution come from? Polystyrene foams are complex compounds often produced with a variety of chemicals. The base ingredients, benzene and styrene, can have toxic effects and can leak into water. Other chemicals can be added for a variety of purposes, such as to make the material change form to foam, increase production efficiency, last longer or change its colour.

Along with those base chemicals and additives, polystyrene can adsorb chemicals from the surrounding environment, such as mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls that are both present in the Great Lakes and that the US and Canada have classified as chemicals of mutual concern because of their qualities to persist, bioaccumulate and be toxic to animals and humans. Therefore, if ingested by animals, the chemicals polystyrene contain can have the ability to be passed on to them.

Now that we know what's in it, what is it used for? There are basically four kinds of polystyrene. Three of them are not included here and are used in such things as electronics and rigid plastic in toys and appliances. What is pictured here comprises the most widely used polystyrene, which is in foam form. There are two types: expanded and extruded, both of which are currently in use for floating docks because they are moisture-resistant, light, buoyant and inexpensive.

Unfortunately, polystyrene foam has been sold unencased or unencapsulated as floatation for docks, as you can see from this example. That has led to litter in our lakes and on our shorelines in both forms, expanded and extruded, which you can see from this zoomed-in shoreline photo.

In 2019, over 100 volunteers from communities on the east coast of Georgian Bay participated in 13 half-day shoreline cleanups, picking up 1,369 pounds of trash. We made a graph of the top 12 litter items they found. Number one, illustrated by the far right bar shooting off the slide, is foam, big pieces and little pieces. The most abundant foam was from docks and floats. This polystyrene foam—or dock foam, as we refer to it—is usually blue, but can also be other colours, like orange, white and pink.

You'll notice from these two shoreline cleanup examples that I'm about to go into that the sizes can range from large pieces as big as hockey bags to smaller pieces the size of woodchips. Therefore, a clear environmental problem is that polystyrene foam fragments into macro and micro sizes, but never goes away. It fragments from animal burrowing and weathering by things like waves, storms and ice. The bigger pieces are sometimes referred to as "icebergs" and can be navigational challenges, but are obviously ugly standouts. As we can see, big pieces can fragment into thousands of pieces, both of these sizes marring the shorelines that are important to Ontarians.

While volunteers have done a great service by continuing to clean up a part of this pollution, there aren't enough volunteers or Seabins to pick up all this litter. The small, scattered pieces are especially challenging. Furthermore, when these fragmented litter pieces are cleaned up by volunteers, they are disappointed to hear that these go to landfill.

It's not just the litter going to landfills or ending up in the environment. It's been estimated that the utility of foam docks is about 10 years before they become too degraded for owners. That means more unproductive waste going to landfills or sometimes abandoned in the environment, versus other longer-lasting or more recyclable alternatives.

In foam pollution, most of the polystyrene isn't just a problem for Georgian Bay, it's an issue for Ontario as a whole. A recent Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup report showed more than 500,000 pieces were picked up by volunteers from 2016 to 2018. Most of this debris was collected in Ontario. This is pollution that is never going to go away. It may break down into smaller and smaller pieces, but it's going to keep accumulating.

What can't often be seen or picked up is the microplastic-sized pieces. Those are less than five millimetres in size. That's about the size of a peppercorn or less. These can be ingested and have impacts on wildlife. Studies in the Great Lakes show microplastic and foam ingestion contamination in some bird and fish species. For example, a study showed that the double-crested cormorant was feeding plastic, including polystyrene foam, to its young. Outside the Great Lakes, in the wild, polystyrene foam was found in the stomachs of several fish species, birds, oysters, mussels, freshwater snails, sea turtles and more.

So it can be ingested, and when it is, wildlife is exposed to the chemicals of polystyrene that we have talked about, leach it and absorb chemicals from the surrounding environment. What can happen when they are ingested? Laboratory experiments show negative impacts of polystyrene when ingested by fish or other animals on growth, survival, feeding and swimming behaviour, liver inflammation and reproduction.

In conclusion, the environmental impacts associated with the breakdown of unencapsulated polystyrene foam are significant. Litter is esthetically unpleasing, and when ingested in microplastic form, it can harm wildlife. Let's work to reduce the source of polystyrene that is in our waterways by ensuring it is properly encapsulated in future floats and docks.

We thank this committee, all shoreline cleanup volunteers and GBF's volunteer dock foam committee. A special appreciation goes to Lisa Erdle, who compiled the science research I have touched on today in Georgian Bay Forever's commissioned report, called Problems with Polystyrene Foam: Environmental Fate and Effects in the Great Lakes.

Finally, we really want to thank Mr. Miller for spearheading this bill. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you for your presentation. I will now call on the township of The Archipelago. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin now.

MPP Paul Miller, you have a question?

Mr. Paul Miller: Chairman, after someone makes a presentation, do we not talk to them, or do we do all the presentations and then we say something? Is that how it's working now?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Yes.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): You may begin now, township of The Archipelago.

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Mr. Bert Liverance: It's a mouthful, isn't it? My name is Bert Liverance; I am the reeve for the township of The Archipelago. It's appropriate that we're talking about dock foam today, on World Water Day, because our generation and generations that follow us are counting on us to do the right thing.

As Heather mentioned, 500,000 pieces of dock foam were picked up on the shoreline between 2016 and 2018. When the township of The Archipelago became aware of this issue in December 2019, we passed resolution 19-211 to basically educate our ratepayers about the impact of dock foam. As a result of that, a number of commercial operators, actually, that were selling dock foam stopped selling dock foam on their own, out of our resolution. Our bill also enabled us to then lobby to encourage efforts to have dock foam banned.

On February 21, 2020, the township of The Archipelago passed resolution 20-029 to basically bring forward a resolution to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Conference, which we are members of, to help influence other municipalities to participate in banning dock foam.

In August 2020, we also did a presentation to the Honourable Jeff Yurek, Minister of the Environment, along with MPP Miller and discussed the dock foam issue, along with others in the Georgian Bay area.

In November 2020, we passed resolution 20-171, which basically commended MPP Miller for his resolution and our wholehearted support of the bill for the province of Ontario, and recommended similar initiatives in all jurisdictions that are watersheds of the Great Lakes. If you look at the watershed of the Great Lakes Huron and Ontario, it is huge. It's massive. It's not just dock foam in our bodies of water, but any body of water that flows into the Great Lakes.

The impact of dock foam is more than just environmental, it's also an impact on our municipality. As Heather mentioned, you take the dock foam and you bring it to a transfer station. We have water-based transfer stations, and a barge costs over $1,000 to haul this stuff out of the bay back to a land-based transfer station where, as Heather mentioned, it would then go into a landfill.

The bottom line is, we thank MPP Miller for all of his hard work to bring this bill forward, and we wholeheartedly support Bill 228.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, Bert Liverance, for your presentation.

I will now call on Gary French. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard. You may begin now.

Mr. Gary French: Thank you all very much for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today on this very, very important initiative.

First of all, I'd like to recognize that I'm happy to see that to this point in time all parties seem to be supporting this initiative, which is a pleasant change in the generally rabid political environment of the day—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Excuse me, Gary French. Please state your name for the record.

Mr. Gary French: Oh, sorry. Gary French, private citizen.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you so much.

Mr. Gary French: I would also like to congratulate Norm Miller for his exemplary leadership in this area and managing to get all-party support so far. That is really positive.

Since I am speaking to you as a private citizen, I thought I'd give you a few of my credentials so that you will at least, I hope, appreciate that I have some background in the area. My family have been Pointe au Baril islanders for six generations, starting back in the early 1900s. I was a director and a past president of the Pointe au Baril Islanders' Association. I was a past director of the Georgian Bay Association. I was a founding director of the Georgian Bay Land Trust, which for those of you who are not familiar with it is more or less a nature conservancy that is concentrated on the Georgian Bay Islands. I was a councillor for the township of The Archipelago for 18 years, from 2000 until 2018. During that time, I had the pleasure of touring several prominent individuals around areas of The Archipelago, including Dennis Schornack, who at the time was the US IJC section head; Donna Cansfield, who was a cabinet minister in the government of Kathleen Wynne; and Norm Miller, who I toured around Pointe au Baril just to give him an idea of some of the issues. It probably scared the hell out of all of them. I think they all headed for the laundromat shortly after the tour.

The issues involved here are both environmental and economic. Anecdotally, the township of The Archipelago arranges three large item pickup days for garbage that the transfer stations will not take each summer. I take in several large contractor bags of bits of blue or white Styrofoam that I collect from the shoreline or that have washed up onshore on those days.

Clearly, this is not a bill to correct a problem that doesn't exist. There is a very clear problem, and when the statistics were quoted as to how many pounds of this stuff were accumulated and taken in, it probably didn't include the bags of this that I took in. It's unsightly, and it's a problem.

Beyond the legislation, there are issues to be considered. Should the legislation apply only to new construction? Personally, I don't think so.

What happens with repairs and rebuilds? Can Styrofoam be encapsulated such that it cannot either escape or allow muskrats to get into it to nest? That is the source of a lot of what I call the popcorn bits of Styrofoam around.

What happens when plastic billets filled with Styrofoam degrade? Many of you are probably aware that there are docks you can buy that have billets that, not in all cases but in many cases, are filled and often filled with the old white—like packing Styrofoam bits. When those break apart, you really have a mess.

Who is responsible for the disposal of old docks which now litter and leak Styrofoam because people are either too lazy or too cheap to arrange for proper disposal, and leave them tucked into back channels or in weedy wetland areas, thus compromising them and the waterfowl and fish that live there?

This issue has a past, present and future component, but it is vital that it is now being recognized. I can tell you that in my years on council at The Archipelago, we wrestled with this problem. In my view, I would prefer that the township simply spend the money to have the offending docks taken away, but the township has consistently tried to educate its ratepayers to be vigilant and to not do this sort of selfish nonsense.

When I talk about some of these issues, having spent 18 years as a councillor, I'd be remiss if I didn't throw in a line that suggested that nothing about this should be used to download to municipalities without commensurate funding.

The economies of cottage country depend and rely upon clean waters and natural unspoiled habitat. Indeed, my own township of The Archipelago was founded in 1980 by a group of non-scientists who hired people to lead the effort to create a township that really has been concerned since day one with two issues: planning and the environment. There was a book that I had the pleasure of being the chairman of getting organized and written called Passion for Georgian Bay: The Founding of the Township of The Archipelago—a citizen planners and action approach led by Tony Ormsby, Wally King, planners Dr. Norman Pearson, John Jackson in Parry Sound and Ross Raymond, who at that point was in Orillia, who all worked to create The Archipelago's very first official plan.

Sustainable ecotourism relies upon sound planning, environmental protection and a legislative framework to balance and protect the interests of all who enjoy them as either private landowners or as public users of the businesses that service their needs, as well as things like provincial parks. We need a start. Hopefully, regs will address issues to implement the legislation fully, as needs are identified and considered fully.

1320

The safe encapsulation of Styrofoam may be possible. I'm not suggesting it be eliminated, but I am encouraging a safer approach to its use. I want to thank you all very much for showing an interest in this problem and taking an important first step together. Again, I stress, I'm really impressed that, to this point in time, it appears that this has

all-party support. That particularly delights me. I again thank Norm Miller for his very, very diligent work.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you for your presentation. This round of questions will start with the official opposition. MPP Jamie West, please go ahead.

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank everyone for their presentations. They were really good. I'm going to try to maybe bounce around, but if somebody wants to answer, they can just put their hand up.

I'll start with Heather, because she started first. First I want to thank you for the work that you're doing and your organization is doing—and also the volunteers, which I think probably will reflect all of the people speaking today. The photos that were shown about how much is cleaned up is just a good reflection of how important this legislation is.

One of the things you talked about was that this tackles a certain area. We discussed this morning with MPP Miller that this is a good solution for preventing the docks going forward, that we have this legislation in place to prevent this sort of construction. What do you see as a next step? Where should we be looking next as government to address other things that are polluting our lakes?

Ms. Heather Sargeant: There certainly is, like I alluded to, plastic pollution in the lakes, but that is something that we're going to take to our own committee for the next round of shoreline cleanups to determine where we would go next. Today I just want to focus on this particular bill and passing this particular bill, and also educating people around transferring their own docks to make sure that there's more foam that is encapsulated on floating docks. But we're happy to come and talk to the committee about other pollution issues as they come up. Thank you.

Mr. Jamie West: Then, just as a follow up, because I had asked this question this morning and I'm not really sure: Aside from bringing it to a landfill, if you're upgrading your dock—in a lot of areas, especially in the north, you have to pull the docks out in the winter—or if you're just deciding to replace what's helping your dock float and getting rid of the polystyrene, where should people be bringing them? I'm really hopeful that people aren't just going to throw them in the bush, which sometimes happens. But if people do want to dispose of them responsibly—because we have discussed how we inform cottage owners where to put them. Where is the best place? What is the best thing to do with the old material?

Ms. Heather Sargeant: That's a really good question, and it is part of the difficulty with this. I think it probably varies a little bit by municipality, but with the various municipalities that I have talked to, you need to bring them to your waste transfer station. In some of the municipalities that I have talked to, they just have to make sure that they're an appropriate size and they can be disposed of. It's not an easy thing, definitely, for dock owners or people who are trying to help with the solution to do, but that is the only recourse at this time.

Mr. Jamie West: I saw that Bert had put his hand up. Bert, if you want to answer, and then I'll ask Gary after that.

Mr. Bert Liverance: In the township of The Archipelago, we actually had specific bins for people to drop off the pieces of the foam. Actually, we had a contest between different cottage associations to see who could bring in the most dock foam, to try and make it as much fun as possible.

But, sadly, as Heather mentioned earlier, even once we receive it at a transfer station, it does go to a landfill site. There are some other alternatives that we've been exploring in terms of digesting not just dock foam but others to have inert come out at the end, but right now it still goes into a landfill site.

Mr. Jamie West: I saw Gary put his hand up, so I'll just offer, if he wants to add anything to it, and then I'll pass it off to MPP Miller.

Mr. Gary French: Yes, just two quick points. Number one, I'd like to have brought pictures for all of you, but given the time of year it's a little difficult for me to wander around out in the bay and get pictures of foam.

To the point of disposal: There really are two separate areas. There are the water-based communities like The Archipelago, like large parts of the township of Georgian Bay, large parts of Carling and so on, and those areas do have the ability to contract with a barge that can take these docks away and dispose of them properly. It is a nuisance, but anything is better than shoving them in a back bay or in a wetland. But I appreciate your questions.

Mr. Jamie West: I wasn't sure if MPP Miller wanted to split the time, if he was waving his arm—I can only see a couple of people, sorry.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Paul Miller, you can go ahead.

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Chair, I'll wait for the next round. I think this is almost gone now, so I'll wait for the next round. Jamie can finish off this round.

Mr. Jamie West: Did you want to reply to something?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): You have two minutes and 42 seconds.

Mr. Jamie West: I see that Bert has his hand up so I'll just allow him to expand—

Mr. Bert Liverance: Yes, one of the things you asked was, what other pollution do we see? Georgian Bay Forever has done a great job. They've got a pilot right now in Parry Sound to capture microfibres coming out of washing machines. I think if you're looking at a next step, trying to get the manufacturer's washing machines to capture—just like you have a lint filter on your dryer, a filter on your washing machine.

The CBC today had a great article on World Water Day and the pollution you see. But there's a lot of pollution you don't see. The microfibres coming out of our own waste systems—there's a lot of plastic that's going into the water right now.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Jamie West, do you have a question?

Mr. Jamie West: I think I'm just going to underscore that. We recently bought a new washing machine and it came with—the guy talked about it as a coin catcher, so I don't think it would be that difficult to have an even finer mesh to capture these tiny pieces of plastic.

I may be short on time so I'm just going to hold here and allow MPP Paul Miller to have the next round.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Paul Miller, do you have—

Mr. Paul Miller: I've got a few seconds left. I'll wait until the next round.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Okay, thank you. Okay, I can see that MPP Lindo has joined us. Please confirm you are an MPP and you are currently in Ontario.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Yes, this is MPP Lindo, fixing their hair in their office at Queen's Park.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you for being here.

This round of questions will start with the government members, starting with MPP Norman Miller. Please go ahead.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to all for your presentations. I really appreciate all your support. I'll ask a question of each of you and then pass it on to my colleagues so I'm not hogging all the time.

I, first of all, want to start with Georgian Bay Forever. Thank you for all the good work that you've done and the research that you have done. I know you have a dock foam committee as well that's working on a regular basis looking at this issue. In terms of the types of foam, is one worse than the other, expanded or extruded polystyrene, or are they equally problematic?

Ms. Heather Sargeant: Thanks for that question. I think I'm going to turn it over to David Sweetnam, our executive director, to answer that question.

Mr. David Sweetnam: Yes. So both foams, as you saw from the pictures, end up broken up and throughout the environment. Animals can get into either and mine their way into a nice cozy little nest, which is one of the major ways of getting into the product. But one of the other features of the expanded polystyrene is it's a little more porous to water infusion, so water can more easily get into it, freeze and actually mechanically break the material apart in the winter time. Of course, that's the material that you see as tiny little fragments of macroplastics that are throughout the bay. There are many other sources of polystyrene: worm containers and things like that too. But from a dock perspective, it seems that both of these materials end up fragmented and littering the shorelines.

1330

Mr. Norman Miller: And do you have research that shows that polystyrene becomes microfibres and any measurement of it in fish or wildlife?

Mr. David Sweetnam: I'll throw this question over to Lisa Erdle.

Ms. Lisa Erdle: Thanks. Yes, so there is evidence that this polystyrene does break down and form microplastics. And you're right that it's really these small microplastics that are ending up in wildlife. It's quite hard for a big chunk of polystyrene to get ingested by an animal, but once it gets down to a size fraction of less than five millimetres, when it becomes microplastic, it becomes quite easy for fish and birds to ingest. All the examples we see from the Great Lakes of animals ingesting polystyrene are really from these microplastics, when they're broken down.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you for that. I'm going to move on to Reeve Bert Liverance from The Archipelago. Thank you for your presentation, Reeve Liverance, and thanks for your resolution in support of the private member's bill and also the other resolutions that you've done. It's clear that you support it and that your council supports it.

I'm just wondering if you have any residents who might be in opposition to requiring dock foam to be encapsulated, or do you think you have pretty good support, which I hope is the answer that you're going to give me.

Mr. Bert Liverance: Yes. I would say, as Gary French mentioned earlier, if you looked at the priorities that our municipality has—and this is really driven by our residents—it is protecting the environment. I think you would be very hard-pressed to find anyone in our municipality who is in opposition to this bill. I would think, if anything, as Gary mentioned, we have not gone far enough, that we should have some more around how to mitigate the existing docks, how to get them out of the environment as well. So I would say you would be hard-pressed to find anybody who is not in support of this bill.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Reeve Liverance.

To Gary, you're obviously very passionate about this issue. You've had a lot to do with it. I still remember that first boat ride you took me on, when my life flashed before me as we went through narrow channels around Georgian Bay. You did give me a good view of the bay, though, so I appreciate that.

You brought up old docks—that's kind of what Reeve Liverance was mentioning as well—the issue of people rebuilding old docks and putting new batts of Styrofoam in. Is that fairly common, first of all, people taking an old structure and replacing a batt that has deteriorated?

Mr. Gary French: I think it is, Norm. There are two subsections to this. There are the docks that people just junked; they're not getting rebuilt. But there are people who do rehabilitate old docks. I see you've got Andy Blenkarn speaking this afternoon. He would be a good person to direct that to, because he does it.

Mr. Norman Miller: [*Inaudible*] specific question this afternoon. And the old docks: I didn't realize that was such a big problem. There are a lot of old docks in bays and things? I'm getting a lot of nodding going on here. I think that would be another issue to take up for sure, then. I appreciate hearing about it, because I didn't realize it was such a widespread problem, that people just abandon them or they drift away in a storm, I guess, and they never find them again—something like that.

I'll pass on, then, so that my colleagues get an opportunity to ask some questions as well. Thank you all—great

presentations. Thank you for your support. I really appreciate it.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Will Bouma, please go ahead.

Mr. Will Bouma: Chair, through you, I was hoping to have a chance to ask Reeve Liverance a couple of questions. I've spent time as a county councillor in the county of Brant, and I go up to Byng Inlet every September with my sons and my best friend and his three sons. We do some fishing and got a couple of good muskies there before.

I was just wondering—I love the concept of empowering our municipalities to be able to make some of these decisions on the ground. I got the sense through some of your testimony that you would like or appreciate some more municipal tools in order to deal with some of these issues that you see happening on the ground. I was wondering if you could expand on that a little bit further.

Obviously, everyone is in favour of this piece of legislation moving forward, but I sense you're like, "This is something that I think the municipality should be able to tackle." I was just wondering if you could give your thoughts on what's available for a municipality to be able to take action on some of these environmental issues locally. Can you do a plastics ban? Could you do this yourself? Could you have your bylaw enforcement do some of those things? Or are you tied up by the province in what you can do, and could we change things in order to give you more latitude in order to do some of those things right there on the ground locally? Just what your thoughts were on that, if you could expand on that.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you. For this round of questions, we'll go back to the opposition. MPP Paul Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: Anyone can field these questions I've got. I discussed it earlier today, in the morning session, and I'm concerned. Bills are great, and they go forward, but what I'm concerned about, especially with the environment, is that once this bill is put into place—and it has got full support from all of us. I'm with the NDP, of course, and we fully support this; any help to the environment is a great thing.

But is there going to be a yearly report that comes back to Norm or to whoever is in power with the progress that has been made on these initiatives? I've been here many years, and I've seen bills that are very promising and very doable that fall by the wayside because of lack of follow-up. I'd like to see some kind of committee or something put in place that really addresses this throughout the province.

I also have some questions about the actual damage that has been done in the last 40 years that's already out there. Collecting a few old docks—I'm not quite certain that that deals with the problem, when it could be dealt with in other ways, through filtration systems and things in the local municipalities that could maybe take some of these [*inaudible*] out.

I'm very concerned about the drinking water. You know we've had problems with mercury up north in different rivers because of the forestry industry, and we've had things like that in many First Nations that are suffering from poisoning from the water. I think that with all the other things that are in the water nowadays—I mean, in Hamilton, we've dealt with the Hamilton bay for years. I've fought for cleanups, and we finally got the bay capped in one area from the steel industries, which has been beneficial. Like I said earlier, we've seen wildlife come back to our area that we haven't seen in 30 years, so that's a good thing.

But another thing that's really concerning me in some of the pictures I was shown today were the animals and the birds digesting this foam in their system, and then hunters go out and hunt and fishermen fish, and then we're obviously going to get it—maybe in smaller amounts, but we're going to get it into our systems, as well.

So this bill is great, and I commend Norm for his initiatives, but I want to see it go further, I think, for our grandkids and what they're going to be drinking and eating 30 or 40 years from now. Like I said, I'll reiterate: I want to see follow-up. I want to see action. I just don't want this to be a pretty bill that doesn't go anywhere. I don't know how you feel about that as a group, but maybe you could give me some feedback.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Go ahead, Gary French, if you want to respond to that.

Mr. Gary French: Thank you for those comments. I think they're all very good comments, and I share your concern, but the issue that's in the subject of this bill—as with any initiative, you have to have a starting point. Is it going to finish everything? Absolutely not. Is it going to fix everything? Absolutely not. Is it going to make a difference that will be measurable? We'll know that once a little time passes after its passage. But I would hate to see this committee go down a rabbit hole of analysis paralysis and have nothing happen for a significant period of time.

I do agree with you and share the concern that when you pass things—is there some sort of measurable output that could be brought back to the committee, so you can say, "Hey, how are we doing?" Probably there is, but those are things that I think will get covered by regs as you go forward, and by anecdotal evidence and by some of the scientific community. But I appreciate your comments, sir.

1340

Mr. Paul Miller: Anyone else got some—oh, good.

Mr. Bert Liverance: I think a quick way for you to see if this bill has the impact you desire is to go and see what SKUs are available in stores. When you stop seeing dock foam being available as an advertised product in stores, then you know that the bill has had the effect. We know that in our own municipality, individuals—without any bill—have already agreed to remove unencapsulated dock foam from their product lists that they're selling to the community.

To your question about what we are doing to mitigate: Our own municipality, with the help of Georgian Bay Forever, has implemented something called a Seabin, which sits by our docks and will actually let water go in and filter out the microplastics. But if you look closely—

GBF may be able to support me or correct me if I get this wrong—my understanding is that there are five brands of beer that are made from Georgian Bay water, and all five of them contain microplastics. It is a ubiquitous issue.

To answer the previous question about, would we have done something if we'd had the ability to as a municipality, on our own? The answer is yes, we would have. But as you know, this is tied to the building code, and so we could not take action on those on our own. But we would have.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Please go ahead.

Ms. Lisa Erdle: I think it's a really good question about how to monitor the bill's effectiveness. Another way to monitor it would be to measure change in the microplastics that are in the water. Also, Georgian Bay Forever has done an exquisite job at collecting data from shoreline cleanups. Over time, you can track what things are ending up in Seabins, what are ending up on the shoreline and what's in surface water floating, and we can, hopefully, see a decline in this type of pollution over time.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): You have one minute and 24 seconds for the official opposition.

Mr. Paul Miller: Maybe MPP Laura Mae Lindo would like to ask a question. I'll leave her some time there.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Please go ahead, MPP Lindo.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you for that, MPP Miller. I'm sorry that I came in late, so I missed part of the presentation, but I do want to follow along with MPP Miller's question. Are there any things that you would like to see in the bill that would be able to better address some of that reporting that he's speaking of?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Is the question to MPP Norman Miller? You have to direct the question somewhere, MPP Lindo. Who are you directing it to?

Mr. Paul Miller: Probably Heather; direct it to Heather.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Directed to Heather: Please go ahead.

Ms. Lisa Erdle: Go ahead, Heather.

Ms. Heather Sargeant: From my perspective, it does not need to be in the bill. We will be following up. As Bert alluded to, we have Seabins and we do shoreline cleanups, simply because we want to find out all the different kinds of litter. So we are tracking it. We will be able to determine if it's going down. I, personally, do not think it needs to be part of the bill.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): For this round of questions, we'll go back to the government committee members. We'll start with MPP Will Bouma. Please go ahead.

Mr. Will Bouma: Oh, good. I'll go back to Reeve Liverance. I appreciated his answer. I was curious if he would have an opinion on whether the province should give municipalities more of the types of freedoms to do that kind of thing, or would he rather that it stayed in the purview of the province, as far as regulating things like the plastics?

Mr. Bert Liverance: That's a tough question. Mother Nature does not respect boundaries that human beings have put in place. Certainly, a municipality acting on its own can make an impact, but I think we have a bigger impact when we act as the whole watershed or the whole province dealing with the issue. So if this is an issue for the township of The Archipelago, it's probably an issue for, as Gary mentioned, Carling, Georgian Bay township, Muskoka. If there are microplastics in our water, there are microplastics in water all across Ontario. Although I would certainly love to have the flexibility to be able to act on my own to mitigate this issue short-term, I think long-term it needs to be acted on province-wide.

Mr. Will Bouma: Now I'll turn it over to MPP Wai. Thank you very much, Reeve.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much to the three presenters. I would also like to say thank you to all of you for supporting MPP Miller's bill.

I just want to say, definitely the water and the environment need to be protected, and this is good. I know that you all have mentioned the value and the worth of it. Can all three of you comment on how your residents will be responding to the costs, and if there is any other material that can be readily available and affordable that can replace—what we're recommending? Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Please go ahead. Three hands are going up.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Any one of you, or all three of you—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): I'll start with Gary French.

Mr. Gary French: I'll take a start on that. First of all, I think nobody, as far as I know, has said we want to ban Styrofoam. We've said we want to encapsulate polystyrenes and do things that would make them safe in the environment, which I think is quite different than saying "ban."

There are other materials that are coming online. There's been a proliferation of steel docks and plastic tube docks, these sorts of things. I'm not sure what their environmental consequences might be. But I think Bert made the point about if you go into stores and see if they're still selling loose Styrofoam, that's going to be a great measure.

In terms of the question about costs and how would our ratepayers respond, I would say, in the main, there's no question that this is going to increase the cost of a dock, because the cheapest dock will no longer be available. However, I think for those people who want to go and enjoy a natural environment, they're willing to pay a little bit more to enjoy an environment that is free of nasty pollutants that are visually upsetting and that we know and/or suspect are hurting the fish, hurting the birds, hurting the wildlife. So I don't see a lot of pushback there. The Archipelago has always surveyed its residents over the years, and I have never seen a survey where the residents were not strongly supportive of environmental issues.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Any comments from the others?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Heather or Lisa, would you like to respond? Heather, please go ahead.

Ms. Heather Sargeant: I think that's a really important question. The reality is, what we're really talking about a lot is floating docks. I mean, there are all kinds of different docks. Another reality is that there's no dock that doesn't have an environmental footprint, for sure. But there are lots of alternatives that are better than all of this fragmentation that goes out. Having it encapsulated is really important. From what I have seen, the alternatives include everything from encapsulated cubes that encapsulate the polystyrene material—those on a standard size can be just a 10% differential, but if you get to some obscure sizes, obviously the cost goes way up. But those will last longer is the reality, so there is some bit of valuation that needs to be taught to the consumer that those are going to last longer than the average lifespan of 10 years.

And then there are certainly more expensive alternatives that are even better, like high-density polyethylene pontoons, or even steel pontoons. Going forward, I think as more recyclable materials are available, some of those can even be made of recycled materials, and then, of course, the steel pontoons themselves are a valuable recycled material. In short, there are alternatives that already exist and there is a certain kind of value because they are going to last a lot longer than the unencapsulated polystyrene foam.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Bert Liverance, please go ahead. You raised your hand.

Mr. Bert Liverance: I think this group should be made aware that, unlike most municipalities, our municipality draws our drinking water directly from the lake. So if we are drawing our water directly from the lake and your health is important to you, you would not want to have material in the water that could contaminate you as an individual. What price do you put on your own health? Whatever the price is to have a secure, safe dock is reasonable.

1350

I think the next question is, how thick should the material be that encapsulates the dock foam? You don't want to have a material that's about as thick as a plastic Baggie floating in the—it needs to be thick enough to be able to handle the weather. Mother Nature demonstrates her power every day on Georgian Bay with her force. If it's a very thin surface that protects that polystyrene, it's going to end up back in the water again. It has to be thick enough to ensure that it does not come out and come into the environment.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Vincent Ke, you have 38 seconds. Go ahead, MPP Vincent Ke.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you to all the presenters; you had wonderful presentations. Thank you for working hard to protect the water and the environment and the animals.

Also, congratulations, MPP Miller, for your proposal.

My question is to Heather. What educational approach can be taken to ensure the basic protection for our beautiful Georgian Bay?

Ms. Heather Sargeant: That's really a great question. I think—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Sorry to cut you off. The time is up.

Thank you for all the presentations.

FEDERATION OF ONTARIO COTTAGERS' ASSOCIATIONS
GEORGIAN BAY ASSOCIATION
FLAT ROCK HOLDINGS INC. / BOATING ONTARIO ASSOCIATION / DESMASDON'S BOAT WORKS

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): We are moving on to the next presentation. The next presenter is the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, Terry Rees, executive director.

You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin now.

Mr. Terry Rees: Thanks very much. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you to the committee for hearing a few remarks from FOCA. My name is Terry Rees. I'm the executive director of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers. Again, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to this important bill and I'd like to thank MPP Miller for taking the lead on this important file.

The Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations is a not-for-profit organization that represents the interests of Ontario's 250,000 waterfront property owners. We do that through our 500-plus member associations that are located across the province.

Our strategic vision is thriving and sustainable waterfronts across Ontario, and we do that through our communications, our education and our advocacy. FOCA has been a long-standing partner with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Lake Partner Program. It's the largest citizen science water-monitoring program in Canada, and for over 25 years we've had over 600 volunteers sampling over 800 locations in a long-term water-quality-monitoring program from Kenora to Cornwall. While this program tracks primarily phosphorus, calcium chlorides and water clarity, we're also very attuned to the related and amplifying effects from chemicals of emerging concern, the threat from invasive species and a number of climate-related threats to our lakes and rivers and to our health, including the advent and growth in the number of blue-green algae blooms.

Since at least 2017, the International Joint Commission, or IJC, has urged the governments of Canada and the US to keep microplastics out of the Great Lakes, not only because they disrupt and contaminate the food chain but also because they've been shown to absorb persistent organic pollutants, like polyaromatic hydrocarbons and PFAS, which are linked to adverse human health effects. These are persistent and can remain bioavailable for decades. Microplastics have been found not only in the oceans and in our Great Lakes but in Ontario's inland waters as well.

As stewards of our precious fresh waters, waterfront property owners see first-hand the impact of microplastics and other contaminants on our biodiversity. Polystyrene foam is a major plastics pollution source in our lakes, as you would have heard from the folks at Georgian Bay Forever. The genesis of much of this material is from unencapsulated polystyrene foam, which is used primarily in the construction of floating docks. FOCA believes that instituting this ban which is envisioned in Bill 228 could go a long way to reducing the plastic pollution that originates from the use of unencapsulated polystyrene foam and will help us to protect our valuable Ontario lakes and rivers.

We would urge the committee to move this bill forward into legislation and we look forward to seeing this bill passed and implemented for our common benefit.

I'm happy to speak to any questions in that portion of the presentation, but, for now, those will be my whole remarks. Thank you again.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you for your presentation.

Now we are moving to the Georgian Bay Association, Rupert Kindersley, executive direction; Katherine Denune, director and chair, lands and forests committee; and Susan McPhedran, past chair, lands and forests committee. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin.

Mr. Rupert Kindersley: Okay. Is the presentation on the screen?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Yes. We can see it,

Mr. Rupert Kindersley: Okay. I'm Rupert Kindersley, the executive director of the Georgian Bay Association.

Katherine, do you want to introduce yourself next?

Ms. Katherine Denune: Yes. Hi. My name is Katherine Denune. I'm chair of lands and forests at the Georgian Bay Association. I'm also a third-generation cottager, and our cottage is in the Sans Souci area of Georgian Bay, which is about half an hour south of Parry Sound.

Mr. Rupert Kindersley: Sue?

Ms. Susan McPhedran: Hi. My name is Susan McPhedran. I'm also a seasonal resident of Woods Bay, and I'm on the board of directors of the Woods Bay Community Association, which is one of the member organizations of the Georgian Bay Association. As will be referenced later in the Georgian Bay Forever presentation, I was involved in one of the many shoreline cleanups and am very well aware of the foam issue along our shoreline.

Back to you, Rupert.

Mr. Rupert Kindersley: Okay. I put this map and short description of Georgian Bay up on the screen just to illustrate who we are and where our associations are, which run from Bay of Islands—I don't know if you can see my little arrow—all the way down to Honey Harbour. My family have been just west of Parry Sound, where the arrow is, since 1881.

We have around 3,000 families that are members of GBA, and we figure we reach around 18,000 people.

The reason why GBA supports this bill is that, as has been stated I think probably by everybody, polystyrene foam is the major plastics pollution source in the Great Lakes. An analysis of the Georgian Bay shoreline cleanup materials collected and Seabin contents, which is a new technology that is working really well, absolutely proves this. Something like 95% of the plastics collected was blue polystyrene foam. There are reasonably priced alternatives that are available for construction of new docks and dock repairs, and we'll talk more about that later.

We believe that in addition to the obvious environmental cleanup, or reducing the amount of foam that's coming into the Great Lakes moving forward, instituting this ban will encourage expansion of the industry in Ontario to create and manufacture viable alternatives as demand switches from unencapsulated foam to alternatives, not just encapsulated foam but other things, which, again, we'll talk about later.

This, in turn, could lead to more employment and business opportunities in both technical innovation and manufacturing and could establish Ontario as a leader in environmentally friendly dock construction. I think this should be borne in mind by the Ontario MPPs as they vote on this bill and taking it right through to completion.

The reason that there is such an opportunity here is that plastic pollution from docks that use unencapsulated polystyrene foam is a global problem and causes massive plastics pollution in all lakes, rivers, wetlands and oceans where it is still in use. Therefore, there is an export opportunity here for Ontario industry, which is another thing that I think should be borne in mind.

Over to—Katherine, is it you on this one? I think it is. Or is it Sue? I can't remember.

Ms. Katherine Denune: It's me. Thank you.

As I'm sure you all know by now, unencapsulated polystyrene foam causes many negative and harmful impacts. First and most obvious is the litter. The foam is broken down either by burrowing animals or animals that chew it, and also via exposure to sunlight. You can see in these lower pictures that these pieces of Styrofoam accumulate along our shore, and in our water as well, but are most visible on the shore.

1400

The second issue is wildlife actually ingesting these smaller particles. Ingestion of these particles can cause internal bleeding, abrasion, ulcers. You can think of it similar to sea turtles in the ocean eating plastic bags or straws. It's the same issue.

And then the next issue is with pieces of polystyrene foam that are even too tiny for us to see. These tiny pieces actually accumulate in our food chain. You can see, with this picture above here, tiny plastic particles are absorbed by algae or plankton and then consumed by fish. Then the fish are consumed by larger animals, or humans consume the fish. And so at each stage in this food chain, these plastic particles become increasingly concentrated, much

more than they would be just in the water. That's referred to as bioaccumulation or biomagnification.

Finally, these particles release chemicals through time as they remain in the ecosystem, and a lot of these chemicals are usually industrial chemicals that are quite toxic to all life.

Mr. Rupert Kindersley: Sue.

Ms. Susan McPhedran: Of course, people are wondering if this material is in such wide use, what can we replace it with? I think most people who are building floating structures on water are looking for stability and buoyancy, and a lot of research has been done on alternatives that can replace this unencapsulated foam. They sort of fall into two categories—you can read the details here: There are modular docks, where pieces of plastic that clip together that are much more resistant to erosion and leeching materials from them or pontoon-based docks, where the pontoon part is either high-density polyethylene or steel pontoons.

Okay, next, Rupert.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Eighteen seconds left. Please go ahead.

Ms. Katherine Denune: Okay.

Our ultimate goal is to remove polystyrene from our waterways. We realize that the first real step in doing this is to stop the source of polystyrene, so throughout the past couple of years of our work on this issue, we have really solidified our—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. The time is up.

Ms. Katherine Denune: Oh, I'm sorry.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you.

Moving on to the next presenter, I will now call Flat Rock Holdings Inc., Boating Ontario and Desmasdon's Boat Works. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard. You may begin now. Welcome.

Mr. Andy Blenkarn: Thank you very much, and thanks to the members of the committee. My name is Andy Blenkarn. I'm wearing a couple of roles here. I do a lot of GR work with Boating Ontario, which is a $4-billion industry. I'm representing the marine industry, with $4 billion and about 30,000 jobs in the province of Ontario. Some of you may or may not have seen us before, so I'm presenting on behalf of their perspective. And also I'm of the unique perspective of Flat Rock Holdings, our company that owns and operates two marinas in Georgian Bay, as well as a contracting business. We're able to repair docks and we sell docks of all different types that are being discussed here, so I'm able to give you some insight on that.

Before I totally begin, I'd just like to properly embarrass him and give a shout-out to MPP Miller who is our local MPP. Today is the 20th anniversary of him being an MPP. Regardless of party, I know that all of you on the committee—serving the public, that's a very demanding job. Doing it for 20 years, Norm, it's quite an achievement. Congratulations. I just wanted to start with that. So a big hand to Norm.

Boating Ontario's perspective on this, while we have dock builders and different things, is one of clean water. Our industry has always been very firm on using the waterways and keeping them as clean as possible. So the concept of eliminating blue polystyrene foam or contaminant from the water is certainly something that our organization is in favour of. You may have seen last year our program of installing Seabins to collect debris. And our Clean Marine program, which is a world-class, world-leading, self-regulating marine industry program, has done a tremendous amount to keep not only foam and contaminants, but also things like antifreeze, lubricants and other things out of our waters, and to operate in a clean environment. Without clean water, we don't have an industry and a business. So we're very, very concerned about it, and it's always one of our focuses.

In terms of docks, when I looked at this legislation—I'd like to say, first and foremost, that conceptually, we are all probably in favour of removing this type of material or minimizing the type of material going out into the water. What I have noticed, as somebody who actually builds and handles this product, is that the legislation, for it to be as effective as possible, should not just be applying to—the biggest culprit is not new dock construction at all. It's actually the existing docks that are in the environment.

If you look over the years—I've been doing this for 24 years—we have seen a definite trend away from polystyrene foam docks. The trend is definitely more towards plastic floats or steel and steel tube docks. Polystyrene in docks is a very effective use of floatation, and it is not bad to use. The issue, really, is how it's been used for so many people.

Often, as you'll see in some of the pictures, the polystyrene is just under a dock. It is not encapsulated; it is not protected. The foam docks that we built in the last decade—I can assure you that none of those docks have put polystyrene in the water. The reason why is we use the Dow Corning product, which is more resistant than some of the earlier ones, and we encase our foam in a stainless steel mesh to prevent critters from digging in, burrowing in and releasing it into the environment. I monitor these docks, and they've had no issue and no release of this material. I hate to say, though, I'm in the minority. Most people do not take the time, care and expense of building a dock using polystyrene foam and encasing it such that that can't happen. So it's not the foam, necessarily, that is the problem. It's how it's being used that's the problem, really.

The devil is in the details in terms of encapsulation. What's appropriate encapsulation? That would be something I'd be very interested in. My understanding is it's going to be done through regulation. Boating Ontario and myself would be happy to help those writing those regulations for them to make sense.

I think the other thing that one has to understand is you are going to increase the cost of docks. Going to a plastic float—I just priced out a dock for a customer. It's an 8 by 26 dock, and the price difference to go to a polystyrene versus a float system is about $2,800 on his dock. So it's a

significant cost. I don't think it's a cost that should be borne by the customer. Keeping the environment clean is certainly going to cost us all more money, and that's fine, but then I think we need to keep in mind, "How can we encapsulate this foam to make it as cost-effective for people as possible?" Not everybody is a multimillionaire who wants to put a dock in the water and can afford to do that.

The other thing that people don't realize is—I do a lot of dock repair, placing new foam under old docks. I think it's really important that this legislation cover the replacement of foam under existing docks. If it only applies to new docks, you're going to have 30, 35 years of no change in the environment, because it's not the new docks that are probably the problem; it's the existing ones, by and large, that are the problem.

Having a product or being able to encapsulate that foam—there are no other products out there on the market that share the same geometry size. So when I'm repairing a dock or replacing foam under an existing dock, there is no other floatation system currently available, unless I put in a coating or mesh the foam or something like that, where that foam will fit into that old dock.

The other thing I would mention to you is steel tube docks. I called my steel tube dock suppliers, a couple of them, this past week. The price of steel has doubled in the past week, so when we make these changes, there are going to be alternatives, but I just want the committee to realize there is going to be a significant cost impact to the consumer to do this. I'm not saying it shouldn't be done, but they should just be aware of it.

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I was then going to leave the rest of my time in case you as the committee had some questions. From a practical side of the docks that are actually in the water, I'm probably the one person on the phone call today who deals with it in the real world, both new dock construction and really what's floating around out there. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you for your presentation. Thank you to all the presenters.

This round of questions will start with the government side. Government members, please go ahead. MPP Norman Miller, please go ahead.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to all of you for your excellent presentations and for your support for the private member's bill. I very much appreciate that. I'll ask a question of each of you and then pass it on to my colleagues who I know will be keen to ask questions.

Terry, I'll start with you because you represent an association that covers pretty much the whole province I believe; is that correct? Terry?

Mr. Terry Rees: Yes, that's correct, Norm.

Mr. Norman Miller: Representing the whole province then, which of your members would be most concerned with this legislation? And do you think most of your members support that—also, given what Andy just said, that for some of the alternatives, it would cost more money?

Mr. Terry Rees: Well, I think our members would understand—many of them multigenerational people who have lived on the water for a long time—that what we did in the past might not be the best practice for the future. I think at least from our [*inaudible*] sustainability and protecting the resource that's there has got to be a primary concern.

I wouldn't say this issue is of a particular concern in a given geography across the province. Certainly on Georgian Bay, where they've got a massive bay of water, you can find piles of this stuff, but you can look on any inland lake that I've been on and find this stuff, either in chunks to small bits or whole billets that have—just because they've been poorly constructed. To Andy's point: There are all manner of good and bad construction.

But I think that our members are in favour of the kind of smart technology that allows them to continue to enjoy the waterfront without threatening the future.

Mr. Norman Miller: And I would assume the large majority of your members also draw their drinking water out of the lake they have their cottage on. Is that correct?

Mr. Terry Rees: It's the same water, so we're very mindful of the fact that what happens on the land goes into the water, and what we do on the water stays in the water. These plastics just never go away. It's something that's of great concern and something that we're very focused on, for sure.

Mr. Norman Miller: Now to the GBA, you were going through your presentation and I think Katherine was on a slide that I noticed had some information to do with education. So do you want to just elaborate on what you were going to talk about with education, please, Katherine?

Ms. Katherine Denune: Sure. That slide was just going to talk about that this is really going to be a continuing effort for us. We have hopes for this bill, but this is a continuing effort for us, and we, as an organization, want to encourage our members and have education materials to help support people in the transition and to help support people to learn more about alternatives.

Mr. Norman Miller: And to Andy, thanks for your practical information about docks. The one thing I'm certainly really interested in, because I hadn't thought about it that much when looking at the bill, was I didn't realize that there were so many old docks that yet you would actually replace the Styrofoam on. I figured the wood would wear out or get rotten and you'd just replace the whole dock. How common is that where you're actually going and replacing batts on existing structures?

Mr. Andy Blenkarn: It's actually more common than you would think. When a customer is replacing a dock—a dock is obviously a very expensive item to replace, and some people have limited budgets and that sort of thing. We always have to be sensitive to that.

It has a couple of factors. First of all, if the existing dock is in enough of a state of repair where it's salvageable—often where the wood docks will wear out is where it meets the waterline, and below, you'll have contamination or the decking itself. But depending on how it's built, the frame

structure that's partially in the water actually will last a long time. You've probably heard of people retrieving sunken logs that are trees that are 100 years old that have been submerged, or partially submerged, and they don't deteriorate. So not all of the dock does deteriorate. If enough of it's good and the shape and configuration meets the client's needs, then, rather than go through the expense of hauling out and getting rid of the dock, what we do is actually flip the dock upside down in the water or pull it up on the shore and actually work on it and replace the bottom, and then actually flip it back over. It's quite a process to watch. We do it a fair bit, Norm.

My point is, if it's going to be effective, and we're trying to reach the goal here, I really think there needs to be consideration given to what's already out there, because I've got to believe that 80% of the contamination is coming from the older stock. If we're just addressing what's being built, that's great, but we're not going to see the impact we want to see if we can't address when somebody goes to repair. When somebody goes to repair, I think for the consumer, for it to be as successful as possible, we need to make sure that the rules around encapsulation, either allowing them to use that foam but using it encapsulated so it doesn't go into the environment, or having a product that will be able to be retrofitted into these docks is really going to be critical to have the success that everybody's looking for.

I will point out one other thing: I have here at the marina—I test all types of these docks. The foam encased docks, the plastic floats, are not perfect either, guys. I have some that are only seven years old and the weld seams are coming apart on them. So you have to watch those too. Those, by and large, are foam with the white foam floatation, which is actually much worse than the blue stuff.

Mr. Norman Miller: We heard some other presenters sort of abandon docks. I didn't realize that was a significant problem. How big a problem is it in the Pointe au Baril area?

Mr. Andy Blenkarn: It is a problem. Again, it's the cost: the consumer paying a contractor like myself to tow the dock in from their property, bring it up on land, separate the foam and the various pieces to take it to the landfill: There's a cost there, so if somebody just wants to, they just pull it around into a back bay. I think the practice is terrible and wrong, but let's acknowledge the reality: that does happen.

Again, if we're making the barrier for the public too costly and too stringent and not versatile enough, I don't want us to encourage more behaviour like that, because the end goal—let's not kid anybody—is let's get the stuff that's floating around the water out of the water.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thanks. I think Rupert has his hand up there. Rupert? You're still muted, Rupert. Hang on.

Mr. Rupert Kindersley: Okay. There we go. Just a couple of extra points on that—thank you, Andy. At GBA, we are trying to (1) encourage local community projects to identify and map where these abandoned docks are, and (2) work with the municipalities to try and get them properly disposed of. To your point, Andy, this is very important. That's one of the things we're doing.

Just to add, on the education front, one of the issues is that by providing good-quality education to our members—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off.

For this round of questions, we'll start with the official opposition. MPP Paul Miller, please go ahead.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you for your presentations. I guess I'll direct my question to Andy. Andy, you've mentioned a few times about the cost to the consumer. That's understandable, but can you put a cost on our health? That's the problem I'm seeing. If you have to throw a few extra bucks into your dock, if you need a dock in the first place, I think it's money well spent—and it certainly keeps you busy.

You've been in the dock business for a few years. What did you use before you had these polyethylene and these other types of Styrofoams for floating devices? What did you use before that?

Mr. Andy Blenkarn: Way back when, the vast majority of boat docks were using a polystyrene foam. Maybe in some of the pictures you saw some of the orange-coloured stuff, and there was white-coloured stuff and blue. That was the majority. That's basically what was there. You would see people use old oil drums. I found a few of those. When they rust out, they're not pretty. I've seen people use plastic barrels as well, various things, but the foam was the primary—the newest version of blue foam is a little bit better than the old stuff, but that's what was being used.

I couldn't agree with you more that if somebody is fortunate enough to be able to afford a cottage property or a dock, certainly spending a few more dollars—my point to that comment is that the cost is not insignificant. It could be a couple of thousand or several thousand dollars per dock. While I think that's good, I'm just saying that to make things as effective as possible—when you make it easy for people to comply and clean up with the environment, you'll get a better result, I guess is my point.

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Mr. Paul Miller: I think I agree with you, but I also think that the old dock system—you were talking about the docks that are in existence now that badly need repair. That, you said, was probably 80% of the problem. And I agree with you.

I brought this up in the earlier session. I said, "Okay, that's great. But how do you—I don't want to say force, but how do you get people to capitulate? How do you get people to remove those old docks at their expense? How do you get rid of the main problem that you brought forward?"

I was very concerned to hear you say that the seams were breaking on the new types of plastics you were using. That's not making me feel too warm all over. I'm hoping that technology can move into a position to help you in your business, as well as the docks, to get something that's

a little thicker, maybe a little denser, less subject to the weather conditions as well as the freezing in the winter—things that are going to not cripple the docks like they have in the past. That's what we need to do.

As I said to Norm Miller earlier today, I'm very concerned about enforcement. If it comes to regs and it comes to a position where the bill—and the bill will pass, I have no doubt; we support it. But I think to enforce it, to actually follow up, is my concern. I'll reiterate again, I would need people in the industry like yourselves and people who are environmentalists to actually monitor the situation, the success or non-success we get, in the next 10 years in reference to the introduction of this bill and report maybe yearly on where we're at and if the initiative has been good and we've seen some results. I'm sure we will to a certain point.

I remind you, I was in the steel industry. I'm well aware that there's benzene in these plastics. Benzene is a cancer-causing carcinogen. Not only is it causing cancer in the wildlife, it's causing cancer in people. We're consuming, as all of you pointed out—a lot of the lakes you take your drinking water out of there too, for the cottagers or for the permanent residents. So my problem is we've got to deal with the drinking water, because you saw what happened in First Nations with the mercury poisoning. They've had to boil water for the last 20 years in some of their areas. That's pretty sad.

I'll be honest with you. I've done a lot of work in the steel industry, and there are over 100 different chemicals combined that can cause more problems in your drinking water that go right into Lake Ontario and right into our intake pipes. There's no way that our plants can take out those carcinogens. For some of them, the boil-off point is 900 degrees Celsius to get rid of it. So believe it or not, folks, we're drinking a lot of bad stuff and have for many years, not just up north, but especially in the south in the industrial areas. I haven't drunk tap water in 25 years.

We have some real concerns. The plastics are one thing, but there are many other things that cause problems too. This is a good start, but I would like to see a report every year on how successful it's been, and I don't know if we'll get that.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): You have two minutes and 21 seconds for the official opposition.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, maybe some answers would be good.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Jaime West, go ahead. MPP Jamie West, you raised your hand?

Mr. Jamie West: It looks like Andy wanted to reply, so I'll let him reply, and if there's no time, I can ask questions in the next round.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Andy, go ahead, please.

Mr. Andy Blenkarn: You raised a good point. Actually, the private sector and private industry—a local builder here, Kropf Industrial, is actually—you talked about the thickness and the concern about the plastic floats. They are actually currently introducing into the market a thicker, more robust tube system and a thicker, more robust float system, MPP, to address what you're talking about. I think as we move forward—I guess that's my point. My point in policing is to work at the manufacturer level to make these products available.

Things are moving in the right direction. What we've seen 20 years ago to today is by and far better than it was. So that is happening currently and it will continue to move forward. The walls are getting thicker; the fabrication assembly process is becoming better. It's the old saying: You get what you pay for. Having some standards would certainly help with manufacturers—and I don't think you guys want to get into having people drive around, looking at everybody's docks. I think that could be a very costly thing, but I would certainly volunteer, and maybe others in our industry who care about the water, or GBA would certainly be happy to do some monitoring and see how it's going and report back to the government over the years ahead.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): We will go back to the round of questioning with the government members. MPP Dave Smith, please go ahead.

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for Terry. It's good to see you, Terry. I haven't seen you in a little bit. When are you coming to my office next? Is it as soon as we're allowed?

Andy was talking about how encapsulating this is going to add cost to it, and if we were to go to plastic or metal pontoons, it's going to increase the cost significantly. How do you think your members are going to feel about that, and are they going to be prepared to spend more money to do something like this?

Mr. Terry Rees: Well, I'll say that it's nice to see you, too, and I'll see you six feet apart for the coming future, I guess, but hopefully see you in person soon.

I will say, having worked in the petrochemicals industry for many years, that industry standards forced the change in a whole bunch of packaging that we use. The first plastic drums that we used for lubricants were terrible. It took innovation. The national packaging protocol came in and forced a whole bunch of industries like ours to change. The change was not without hiccups, but it led to innovation and meant that we eventually got some better products at better pricing.

So change isn't always free or cheap, but I think that if the challenge is there to make sure that we're putting out products that are durable, that are going to have higher satisfaction with the customer and better environmental results, that it's going to be better for everybody. I would say nobody wants to pay more for anything; I think that's understood. But I think, again, with innovation, with the right set of standards and rules in place, then industry is receptive and responsive.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thanks. I'm going to quickly summarize that and jump over to Andy. I think what you're saying to me is that if there's a forced change on it, then the supply of the other types of products that currently are not being used a great deal will increase, and that will lower the price of it, so we may not actually see a significant net increase in price.

Andy, I'm going to jump to you next. You talked about possibly encapsulating the Styrofoam in a unique way that doesn't allow it to break up. If there is anything that's porous in it, some of those microfibres could get out. How would you encapsulate it in a way that doesn't allow for any of the fibres to leave?

Mr. Andy Blenkarn: Not all dock foam is the same. In the past, when a customer has requested it, we tended to purchase a little bit more of a higher-grade foam, and it's more impervious. On a microscopic level, is it wicking into the water? Probably. You could probably say that with a number of building materials. But our biggest problem where we've had it is allowing muskrats, especially—that like to feed on it or nest in it or pull it apart for nests. So our solution has been—and again, not regular galvanized mesh, but a stainless steel mesh that won't rot or deteriorate and basically last forever. It's a fairly tight grid.

Other forms of encapsulation: With this new bill, it would take time for industry, but I'm not sure if a liquid rubber or polymer or something going around the—not changing the dimensions and size of it would be a way to go. I think that's something that the manufacturers of this type of product—I would probably defer to them on the best way to do that, but it could be as simple as encasing it either in wood or a polymer or something like that, but fully, completely.

I just think the importance is if it's of a size that can be used in the existing docks that are out there, then we have a tremendous opportunity to encourage people not just to replace the whole dock but at least retrofit their dock. My concern right now is that that product, in that size, isn't there, but perhaps with this legislation and putting it on the manufacturers, they will develop a product for it. It's certainly a product that I would use. It could be as easy as a liquid rubber compound or something like that, but I'm not an engineer or a dock—we just put a physical barrier in front of it for us currently, and it works. I check these docks. I've got ones that are 10 years old. There has been zero deterioration of them. But I can point to one that doesn't use it, and I can see tons.

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Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to turn it over to my colleague MPP Ke.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Vincent Ke, please go ahead. You have two minutes and 33 seconds.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you all for the presentations. My question is to Andy or to Rupert. As MPP Miller has mentioned earlier, what should be done after this bill to bring successful outcomes? For the existing docks, from the law enforcement perspective, could there be municipal bylaw officers to enforce this ban?

Mr. Terry Rees: Oh, was that to me? I'm sorry. I think the municipal bylaw is a pretty tricky proposition. I would think that, again, starting with the manufacturers—notwithstanding Andy's point, which is correct, that these things last forever and the problem will persist. If we start with not putting any more of these docks in, I think that that's a major start.

There's advice from suppliers and installers like Andy and his colleagues, who are going to give the kind of advice that people will need so that they build things better and build back better, as they like to say, and do it in a way that's cost-effective in the long run. I think municipal bylaw enforcement would not be an effective approach, personally.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): You have 57 seconds left for the government. MPP Daisy Wai, please.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I just want to ask Andy, then: Do you see any downsides to this bill?

Mr. Andy Blenkarn: In concept, not really. Like I said, the devil is really in the details. The devil is in what is the definition of "encapsulation" and what the best way to do that is. I believe the impression would probably be to deal with that in the regulations. Certainly members, like myself, in the community would be happy to help craft and help give input on those regulations to make them effective. I think it's a great step. I just think that if we want to get the biggest bang for our buck, we should make it as easy and as effective for people, not only from new construction, but also from the existing product—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, Andy. Sorry to cut you off.

This round of questions will start with the official opposition. Please go ahead. MPP Jamie West, please go ahead.

Mr. Jamie West: I'm going to continue basically on Andy's comments. I think when you were giving your presentation—I apologize if I misheard it—you talked about having some of this encased in a steel mesh, and I hadn't even considered that as encapsulation. I'm not saying that it's a bad idea; it just sounded odd to me. If you wouldn't mind just sort of explaining how that works, because what I see in my head might be different.

And then, just related to that, I'm wondering what you see as the most cost-effective way of encapsulating the foam? The reality is that people are going to look for the cheapest option. What do you see as the most effective, but cost-effective, way to encapsulate the foam?

Mr. Andy Blenkarn: In terms of what we do with the mesh—and this is just a homemade way to do it, because we didn't like, and our customers don't like, critters in their docks, and they don't like to see the foam things. I think it's important to realize that the dock owner is also very caring and sensitive about the environment. The education information that Rupert talks about—people will listen to that, at least the folks on the bay that I'm familiar with.

We literally put a mesh with a floor runner protector—stainless steel mesh—under the dock. It actually comes up the sides and goes overtop, so all four sides of the cavity, we'll call it, of the dock where the foam is, are enclosed with this mesh. Again, it's stainless steel, because galvanized mesh or other metal meshes will rot, deteriorate and break down after a couple of years.

In terms of the most effective way to encapsulate this stuff, I'm not an expert on foam. I'm sure there are some better ways. I could see doing that, a combination of that with some thinner plywood. I could see a flexible polymer

either sprayed or applied to it that prevents the flaking. Again, it's going to have to be rodent-proof, we'll call it, or critter-proof. That would be the most effective way.

I will tell you, even putting mesh or anything around it does increase the cost of the docks, right? Anything extra you do that the guy down the road doesn't do.

Mr. Jamie West: No, I appreciate that. I appreciate the opportunity to talk to someone who does that sort of work, because many of us probably have a dock, but aside from walking on top of it we probably don't think very much about what's underneath.

I'm going to ask a similar question, actually, to the other presenters as well. I want—I've got my order out of—it's a lot easier when we're all in the same room. I just wanted to ask the Georgian Bay Association a similar question about what they see as encapsulation. I don't know if the Chair can pick—because I can't see you guys on the screen—who can answer.

First, I want to thank you for, in your presentation, saying "dock foam," because "dock foam" is clear; "polystyrene" is difficult. What do you see as a good encapsulation? What are maybe some minimum specs? Because there will be areas where people say, "Yes, it's encapsulated. I painted it," and that will wear off with the first little bump that it gets.

Mr. Rupert Kindersley: I'm not sure we're the right people to ask for the best way for industry to address this and the best methodology. We're an advocacy organization.

The little bit we do know is that encapsulation, and the type of encapsulation, is actually very important, as Andy was saying. If it's too thin, the rodents, particularly muskrats, can plow right through it, and the objective is lost. So if you're going to use some kind of polymer or plastic encapsulation, it's got to be thick enough and robust enough to last long enough to do the job. The best is probably steel, but as we've heard, it's the most expensive.

I think what will happen here is, with the introduction of this legislation, as we've heard earlier, industry will step up to the plate and will provide, perhaps, some different solutions that we don't actually have today. That's what I would hope.

Mr. Jamie West: Okay. And then Katherine, I saw your hand up.

Ms. Katherine Denune: Yes, I just want to add to that. I think, probably just from our own experience, animals burrowing into docks is a big way of bigger pieces getting dislodged. But I think it's important to remember that it's not just animals: UV rays, so sunlight, are also a significant factor in the breaking up of smaller pieces. So any kind of encapsulation where it's still, I guess, exposed to sunlight or to air will allow for that to continue to be a factor.

Mr. Jamie West: Yes, it's something to consider for sure.

Terry, I'm not sure if you wanted to comment or if you had any comments.

Mr. Terry Rees: Again, notwithstanding my petrochemicals remark, I'm not a plastics expert so I won't suggest the thickness or the material, but I know, for instance, the Ontario building code stipulates how you're meant to build a wall that won't collapse on your house, what kind of wiring you're meant to use so your house doesn't burn down or what sort of plumbing to do. So having performance standards, for which the industry can then use their innovation to figure out their best, most cost-effective way to address that, I think is going to go a long way to solving this problem. And, again, the leadership of the industry—both the manufacturers and the people that are doing the front-line customer work—is going to go a long way to solving this problem, on the retrofits as well as on the new builds.

Mr. Jamie West: Yes, I think it's really interesting, the retrofit. I made a note when Andy was talking about that there's a standard size. I just assumed that you could get the plastic-filled ones in any size. I think there's an opportunity for someone to corner on this, on being able to replace it. This is great for 40 years from now when all the old docks are destroyed and then all the new docks will be this format, but there will be a lot of people just replacing them, and if you can at least find something that fits, it's going to be a lot easier.

Do you know, Andy, what is the standard size? Is there a standard sort of height/width?

Mr. Andy Blenkarn: Yes, there is. Most dock foam you see is a seven-inch thickness and it's a batt that runs about—we'll call it—48 inches long and it's about 16, 17 inches wide. The challenge with the plastic floats is for their size. They have about 50% of the buoyancy that the polystyrene does. So that's one of the challenges.

That's why I'm suggesting from an encapsulation standpoint, the mesh or some kind of coating on them, and while I acknowledge that the coating from UV from our colleague from GBA—you also have to remember that a proper dock has fascia boards and things on it so it doesn't get a lot of direct sunlight, and it can be made so it doesn't get a lot of direct sunlight—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you so much. Sorry to cut you off.

Thank you for all the presentations, and thank you to all the presenters.

We are moving to the next presenter. They haven't arrived yet. Can we have a small recess until 3 o'clock? I believe there is an agreement? Yes, thank you. We will start the meeting at 3 p.m.

The committee recessed from 1442 to 1500.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Good afternoon. We will now resume public hearings on Bill 228, An Act to prohibit unencapsulated expanded or extruded polystyrene in floating docks, floating platforms and buoys. We have a final group of presenters.

TOWNSHIP OF CARLING

TOWNSHIP OF GEORGIAN BAY

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): I will now call on the corporation of the township of Carling. You will have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your

name for Hansard, and you may begin now. Welcome. Please, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Konoval: My name is Mike Konoval, and I'm the mayor of the township of Carling. Our municipality is located two municipalities north of the town of Parry Sound, and our MPP is Norm Miller.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the standing committee, for the opportunity to speak this afternoon on this bill. Thank you, MPP Miller for presenting this bill to the Legislature. It's much appreciated.

I suspect by now you've heard a number of presentations on the subject matter, and I don't wish to cover all of those again, because that would be counterproductive. If I may, Mr. Chairman, I would like to share a personal experience, not necessarily with floating docks or floating platforms or buoys, but about a boat, my own personal boat. If I may share this story with you—it happened a few years ago.

My family and I have enjoyed a 21-foot Starcraft Islander for many years. We kept it tied at a private dock. That particular fall, after Labour Day, we had a lot of rain. I hadn't been in to check my boat for probably a couple of weeks, and on the day that I arrived, it was a miserable day. It was pouring rain. Without giving it much thought, I climbed into the boat quickly and realized that something wasn't right. When I lifted the engine cupboard, the bilge was not only full of water, but it was full of Styrofoam. There was white Styrofoam floating everywhere on the top of the water in my bilge. What had happened was an animal had got in, had chewed the ballast under the seats, the Styrofoam had spread throughout the hull of the boat in the water, and it had plugged my pump. Now, my pump was an automatic bilge pump, but it had plugged it right up, and you couldn't pump water out. Had I not checked my boat when I did, I suspect it probably would have sunk, because there was a lot of water in the boat. So the dilemma was how to get the water out of the boat. The bilge pump wouldn't pump it. I had to bail the water. There was probably—I don't know—25 gallons of water. Of course, I had to dump the water into a strainer so that it wouldn't put the Styrofoam into the Georgian Bay.

That was an experience that I haven't forgotten in the years that I've been dealing with Styrofoam. I thought that was something worth sharing that you should be aware of. Though, this was old polystyrene. It was 1976. I suspect that the product today that is much newer is much better. But that was an experience I had, and I know there are a lot of boats on the bay that have the Styrofoam in them. In the case of my boat, it was an enclosed boat. It was covered in. Even though the water got in to a certain amount or degree, it could have caused serious problems, or the loss of my boat. That was really what I wanted to share with you.

I did check with my council today. I speak on behalf of my council and the people of our community. We are all on Georgian Bay. Our western boundary and our southern boundary are all on Georgian Bay. As we speak, there is Styrofoam floating along the edge of the water in a community where one of my councillors has his cottage. We get Styrofoam pieces on our beaches every spring. It's become a huge problem, and I'm very grateful for this bill that I hope will help resolve some of the concerns that we have. I'm not totally opposed to Styrofoam as such, but I think there has to be a way to definitely keep it so that it doesn't get into the water.

That's really all I wanted to share with you this afternoon.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, Mayor, for your presentation.

Next, I will call on the township of Georgian Bay. Mayor, you have seven minutes for your presentation. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin now. Thank you. Welcome.

Mr. Peter Koetsier: My name is Peter Koetsier and I am the mayor of the township of Georgian Bay. As Mike mentioned, I don't want to repeat all that you've heard from the various groups in the prior two hours, I'm sure, and they can present the science much more readily and accurately than I can. I can just tell you from personal experience that I'm sick and tired of collecting bits of foam along the shorelines.

It tends to be the worst in the spring and then whenever we have a storm. It's not good for the environment; it's not good for those of us who enjoy the waterfront. In Georgian Bay, it's a challenge more than in the inland lakes in the sense that we have significant water level changes over the years. I think between 2013 and 2020, it changed something like six and a half feet in height. Therefore, floating docks are very common. They're really the only practical way to have a dock on something like Georgian Bay.

There's no question that these blocks of Styrofoam, or just blocks of foam, are the most economical and the easiest way to build a dock, but they also last the shortest length of time and they break apart. Animals burrow into them. They get destroyed by ice. They can't handle a bump against a rock without chipping something off. It's just not a good dock material. The only advantage it has is it's cheap.

So I'm 100% in favour of this bill. I think it's long overdue. I actually wish Mr. Miller had put it forward 20 years ago, but so be it. I think it's very important.

I also want to mention that I happen to be a director and officer of the Georgian Bay Land Trust. They have authorized me to confirm that they also are fully in favour of this bill. I am also a director and officer of the Georgian Bay Biosphere, and while they have not passed a resolution supporting this bill, individually most of the directors have told me they are absolutely in favour of it because it's what's best for the environment.

I think it just makes complete sense to encapsulate this foam or use an alternative product that doesn't break apart and doesn't litter the waterside and the shorelines. The other materials—they're not food for animals. The animals unfortunately are eating this product. When it breaks down into very small pieces, it gets consumed, and it's a pollutant.

I strongly encourage you to recommend passing this on final reading and making it law as soon as possible, because I would love to see years in the future where we're not cleaning up these little bits of mostly blue, but can be white and other colours, of foam along the shoreline. Thank you.

I trust you do have a copy of the township resolution in support, so you know that I'm not just speaking on my own.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, Mayor, for your presentation.

Now, we are moving on to the questions and answers. This round of questions will start with the official opposition. MPP Paul Miller, please go ahead.

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, thank you, Peter and Mike. Your presentations were the best of the day: They were short and sweet. We've listened to a lot of scientific and technical questions, and I think we've covered a good portion of them.

I'm glad you brought up your experience, because I can remember back when I used to go up to Orillia and Lake Couchiching. I remember around the dock, there would be little pea chunks of this stuff, and the guy that owned the boat launch there used to get rather upset with it because it would get into the engines and the propellers and everything. He used to get really irritated. Luckily, he was a mechanic that actually repaired the boats. His name was Mr. Gabourie, and he had Gabourie cottages. He was the guy that everybody took their boats to on Lake Couchiching. It was quite an early exposure; that would have been in the 1960s. There were types of Styrofoam in those days too.

Yes, it's long overdue, no doubt about it, but I also hope that you guys take into consideration the fact that it's in your drinking water too. It breaks down. It's microscopic, and it can break down. Not only are the birds and the animals chewing on it and nesting with it, it's getting into your drinking water and has for many years. That's a very big concern, because I know, working in the steel industry, as I mentioned before, that one of the by-products of the foam is benzene, and benzene is a known carcinogen to man. A lot of guys I worked with died from benzene poisoning on a daily basis where I worked for many years. So it certainly goes further than just docks; it goes into everything, and we have to get a handle on this for our grandkids and generations to follow, because if we don't, it's not going to be a very healthy atmosphere for anybody.

1510

So I applaud your interest in this, and I applaud Norm for bringing it forward. Like you said, he has been there 20 years. Maybe year one would have been better, but we'll live with 20 years later.

But it's good to know that the northern communities are on top of this, because don't forget, the water comes down our way and then goes out to the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence, so we get it even worse. We get even more concentrations than you do from the rivers and things. So it's good to be on top of it.

I think you'll have all-party support on this. To me, it's a non-partisan bill. It's a bill that's good for everybody. I wish the government would do a few of ours; it would be a lot better for the community too. But you know how it works.

I hope to have some follow-up on this from Norm, and I hope they can give maybe a yearly report to the Ministry of the Environment or also to municipal affairs. That would be good to know, that things are happening for the better.

Thank you for your presentations—like I said, the best presentations of the day.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Any other questions from the official opposition? None?

This next round of questions will start with the government members. MPP Norman Miller, please go ahead.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Mike, for taking time to present, and Peter, for taking time to present to committee today, and thank you for your support for the private member's bill. It's very much appreciated.

I guess I'll start with a couple of questions, and then if my colleagues have any further questions, they will follow up.

Mike, in Carling township, which isn't too far away from where I am right now, how much of a problem is foam in the water and along the shoreline?

Mr. Mike Konoval: Norm, it has become an increasing problem every year. I was talking to one of our councillors this morning, Councillor Susan Murphy, in preparation for my presentation. We have a beautiful beach called Fitzgerald Bay beach, on Georgian Bay. It's the best beach that we have. Every year, a group have to go in early in the spring when the ice is out and clean up the Styrofoam. It's just completely all over the beach, and of course, it's coming out of docks that the muskrats have visited in the fall and throughout the winter, as they've embedded themselves. As soon as those docks are put in the water, or even if they're left in the water during the winter, the Styrofoam starts to move as the ice goes out.

We're getting the same thing—I'm sure you've heard it from others as well—but abandoned docks are a huge problem for us. We have one area where there were over eight or 10 docks pulled up on a rather large shoal. Of course, as the water levels fluctuated—they're high, but I think they're on the way down now. But as soon as the spring breakup came, those docks began to float out. They were a boating hazard, but the Styrofoam began to make its way in to the shoreline. So it's a very serious problem for us, Norm, and I hadn't even thought about drinking water, so kudos to the gentleman who suggested that.

Mr. Norman Miller: Mike, I must admit, I hadn't realized that abandoned docks were such a significant issue. Is that a case where the high water levels and the ice etc. are just taking docks away with them in more extreme weather, or is it a case of people actually taking them somewhere because they don't want to properly dispose of them? Do you have any idea about that?

Mr. Mike Konoval: Yes, absolutely, Norm. The example I just cited—the odd dock does get loose. Every

time there's a storm, it seems that a dock that is not well maintained, is old, will get away and then it will be drifting. But when they outlive their usefulness, people quietly take them away in the fall and drag them into back bays, little quiet bays, or up onto shoals, and they just abandon them. They just leave them. As you may have heard from a former councillor in The Archipelago, they actually hire a contractor to go around in the spring and pick up those docks as soon as the ice is out. We haven't done that yet. We've been able to contain the docks where we find them and we can immediately drag them to shore, but we still have to dispose of them; we still have to deal with the Styrofoam in them. It's becoming a larger problem every year.

Mr. Norman Miller: Have you heard from your residents with respect to this bill, whether they support or don't support it? Some of the alternatives are more expensive, although I would argue they likely last a lot longer. I know I got a new dock last year from Kropf Industrial in Parry Sound, and I think the warranty on its plastic tubes is 99 years, and it's got an aluminum frame, so it seems to be pretty substantial, and I'm expecting it to last quite a long time. But any feedback from your residents who may incur some higher costs on docks as a result of this?

Mr. Mike Konoval: I haven't had direct feedback, Norm, but certainly, as I hear from our ratepayers from time to time, there is a real concern. By the way, I did want you to know—and we as a council, I thought, had passed a resolution. If not, we will, because we definitely support this. All of council supports it. As you know, one of our councillors owns a marina on Georgian Bay, and he would know first-hand the problems that Styrofoam creates for him in his business. But I think our ratepayers would be overwhelmingly in support of this bill, Norm.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, and thanks for presenting today, Mike.

Peter, what about you? Have you had any feedback from your residents with regard to this bill and whether they would be supportive of it?

Mr. Peter Koetsier: They would be with the "Why didn't we do this 50 years ago?" school, in most cases. Every spring—most of our residents are seasonal and at least half of them are water access only, so many of them don't see their places during the winter. Every spring you go up, the ice is broken up and you have no idea what will be floating along in the water—anything from pieces of docks and lumber and whatnot—but the Styrofoam is a given. You can pick up chunks that are so large you can't fit in a garbage bag, to pieces you can barely see. It's the whole range, and it's all along the shoreline.

As I say, every spring, I'm used to collecting a few garbage bags' full. And then each time there's a storm or a significant change in water levels, often that produces a little bit more floating by, because stuff that got stuck on a shore somewhere else, the water comes up, a wave washes it away and it gets in the water and drifts a little farther. Because I'm in a bay, we're on the—call it the eastern shore—a lot of the water from Georgian Bay ends up on our shore eventually and along with it comes the Styrofoam.

Mr. Norman Miller: Would dock foam be the biggest source of contaminants along the shoreline in Georgian Bay township?

Mr. Peter Koetsier: I think in volume, yes. We do get the occasional pieces of wood—that would be the number two item—and sometimes sizable pieces of wood. But to me, the number one shoreline litter item, if I can put it that way, is these Styrofoam pieces. I think probably with the Georgian Bay Forever, when they did shoreline cleanups, dock foam was something like 75% of what they collected—I forgot what the figure was—and I would say that's consistent with my experience.

Mr. Norman Miller: In terms of alternative floating docks—because obviously in Georgian Bay I think you'd be crazy to have any other type of dock other than floating, with the fluctuating water levels—I know I visited Point Pleasant Marina. He was very environmentally conscious, and in a commercial setting he seemed to think that the best sort of dock was a steel dock, especially with big boats—probably a little more substantial—and you can totally recycle the steel, and I guess take the wood away as well. But have you thought about alternatives to this? And I guess I'll add an extra one on, and that is how you might encapsulate Styrofoam, if you were using Styrofoam.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Sorry, MPP, to cut you off. Your time is up. We thank you for the presentation.

We'll go back for this round of questions, starting with the official opposition. You have seven minutes. MPP Jamie West, please go ahead.

1520

Mr. Jamie West: I want to apologize to the last speakers. We had a quick recess, and with technology being what it was, I couldn't hear anybody. You could probably hear me, but I couldn't hear anybody, so I missed the beginning of the presentations. But I think there was a good conversation happening, judging from the questions that were happening previous to this.

There was a lot about cleanup, and I wanted to ask about where you see the next target being. We're all aligned so far; we've had good conversation all day about this. As New Democrats, we're voting in favour of it, and I'm sure the Conservative colleagues of MPP Norm Miller are supporting it as well. What's the next target for us to look at? What should we be thinking about in terms of protecting water systems or damage to docks or that sort of thing? I'll ask Mike; sorry, I forgot I had to ask somebody.

Mr. Mike Konoval: That's a good question. I wasn't prepared to answer questions other than just what we were given to ask. Just run that question by me again, and I'll try to see what I can do for you.

Mr. Jamie West: Yes, I apologize for catching you off guard. It was basically—

Mr. Mike Konoval: Peter was actually speaking and never got a chance to finish his thoughts. Would you like him to do that?

Mr. Jamie West: I would love that, yes. Peter, if you'd like to finish, that would be great, because I only got to hear part of it anyway.

Mr. Peter Koetsier: I'll just finish. I have an answer for you, as well, to your question, but to finish answering MPP Miller—I should say Norman Miller, because there's more than one Miller on this call—steel docks were always the traditional long-term dock material, floating steel tube docks, but HDPE plastic is now, in the last couple of years, becoming quite popular. It's a little bit more expensive than the steel, even though with the way building materials are going now, I'm not sure how that varies day to day. They see it as having a life of up to 100 years. It's a heavy plastic, it doesn't rust and it's at least as strong as the steel, and I think we're going to see more and more docks made of flotation on this heavy plastic-like material.

And then you're asking about, what's the biggest problem damaging our waters?

Mr. Jamie West: Yes.

Mr. Peter Koetsier: Once you get past the plastics, I would say that the one that I am sometimes more sensitive to is the sewage. We've got three sources of concern. One is the towns that have systems that overflow into the lake, especially in storm situations where they can't handle the volume, and so it's only partially treated sewage that goes in the water. I know there has been some activity on that.

There are individual septic systems.

But also there are boats, the cruisers, and it's frustrating to know that the cruisers are not meeting the same standards that the cottagers have to meet, in the sense that you've got these bays that host a dozen or 20 cruisers every weekend. If you measure that water at the end of the summer, it's definitely significantly more polluted than it was at the beginning of the summer, and so we know the boats aren't doing the job. I mean, they're allowed to dump greywater. Who the heck in their right mind says that greywater—which has all that soap, chemicals and what have you in it—why should you be allowed to dump that into the water, where the cottager has to put it through a septic system? Yes, I have a bit of a bug on that one, but that, to me, is something that should be addressed.

Mr. Jamie West: I appreciate that, Peter. It's a good conversation to have. Where our camp is—I'm farther north, so we tend to say camp instead of cottage—we're on a small bay that connects to Nipissing, which is much larger. My frame of mind often is that when you go, it's not the same as where you are—I keep thinking of a small little bay the size of a baseball field instead of the larger area. If we see a cruiser, everyone comes outside to look because of the size of them, right? That's really why I'm asking that question, because I think we are aligned on what's going to happen on this bill and what we're doing on this bill. I always like to think ahead: Where else should we be looking? Where do we set the goalposts next?

I asked a question earlier—and I apologize if I'm not asking the right people: In terms of encapsulation, what would you like to see? I know that there was some conversation about steel. I'm from Sudbury; I would love it all to be nickel-encapsulated stainless steel. But steel and plastic: Is that what makes sense to you guys? I'll ask Peter

Mr. Peter Koetsier: In reality, if you have steel or you have the plastic tubes, you don't need any foam at all. To me, the consequence of this bill is not that we're going to have a bunch of foam encapsulated; it's that we're not going to have any foam at all—at least when it comes to most docks. Smaller items, I can imagine, anything from surfboard-type things, wakeboards and all that stuff—if they're made of foam, they'll have some form of fibreglass or plastic around them. We still have a Styrofoam surfboard with nothing around it from way back when. But I think that in many cases, the consequence of this would be just a lot less foam on the water, encapsulated or not.

Mr. Jamie West: Yes. Often, through all the deputations—I don't know if you were able to see the earlier ones, but I keep thinking about how it wasn't that long ago—at camps, people would build retaining walls out of old railway ties or kerosene-treated telephone poles. It's just how it was, right? So you can't anymore.

I want to applaud MPP Norm Miller for putting this in place. It will take some time before it comes into effect, but it is that turning point, so I think it's a solid bill.

Chair, I don't have any more questions. I'm going to just stop there. I think we're all aligned.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, MPP Jamie West.

Now we are going to the final round of questions. We'll start with the government members. Please go ahead, MPP Norman Miller.

Mr. Norman Miller: I don't think we're going to use our full time, but I just had a couple of quick ones for our presenters.

First of all, Peter, thanks for passing the resolution of your council in support of the bill. I really appreciate it. I think that has been beneficial in terms of helping to move the bill through the process. So thank you for that. And it sounds like Mike's council is going to pass a resolution, so I look forward to seeing that as well.

Mike, just one quick question for you: It came up in some of the earlier presentations—and I know you're a very practical sort of guy, having built the highway going out through Carling township, as you've told me on a few occasions. How much retrofitting of old docks is there? I was kind of surprised to learn from one of the presenters that builds docks and works on cottages that he gets asked to take old batts out of existing docks and replace them. I, frankly, didn't realize that that happened. Have you seen much of that in your township?

Mr. Mike Konoval: No, Norm, we haven't. With the advent of premium docks, various companies that are now building these new docks—almost every area of Carling that I travel, when I'm out on the water, there are new docks. You see very, very few old docks being upgraded. I don't think it's happening here; I really don't. Because our shoreline is so exposed, docks have to be in good shape. They have to be well-secured. I think people are finding it far more economical to go out, buy a good dock and secure it well.

Norm, could I just add one thought to a question that came from the earlier gentleman? When we're talking about water quality—and I guess that was the question that was asked—there's one particular matter that most people don't think a lot about, and it came up in a water quality examination that we were doing a number of years ago. We struck a water quality committee and we started testing the water. You know the one thing that pollutes our Georgian Bay? Broken beaver dams. The water that comes out of beaver dams is toxic. We live on an old farm here and our dam broke this winter. The beavers have moved out. There's no more feed left for them. They like the poplar trees, small birch etc. But in the middle of winter—I've never seen it happen before—the dam broke and the water started flowing right through our property where there's a creek. The smell of that was almost—it was very unpleasant, I'll put it that way. Those toxins go right into the bay, and let me tell you, that's rotting vegetation, it's dead fish, it's dead everything. It maybe doesn't happen very often, but when it does, it does damage to the water quality of Georgian Bay. So I just wanted to add that thought.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you. I don't have any further questions. I appreciate you guys both presenting today to the committee.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you to Mayor Mike Konoval and Mayor Peter Koetsier for your presentations.

We have four minutes and 18 seconds left. For government members, do you have any questions? No? Okay, thank you.

Thank you to all the committee members and for the presentations and presenters. That concludes our business today. As a reminder, the deadline to send in written submissions will be 7 p.m. today, March 22, 2021. The deadline for filing amendments to the bill is 12 noon on Tuesday, which is tomorrow, March 23, 2021.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Wednesday, March 24, 2021. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 1531.

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