

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about my private member's bill, Bill 76, the Lifejackets for Life Act.

I want to begin by talking about where the idea for this bill came from. My good friend Dan Mulligan is a retired OPP helicopter pilot. On one of our annual canoe trips, he mentioned the impact that searching for missing boaters had had on him, in particular the searches for children. Far too often, he said, the search ended in tragedy. This trauma is compounded by the knowledge that many of these deaths could have been prevented if the deceased had simply been wearing a life jacket. Every single one of these deaths is heartbreaking, but I'm particularly saddened when I hear that a child was killed in a boating accident.

When I tell friends, constituents and even some of my colleagues here in the Legislature about this bill, many are shocked that it's not already the law for children to wear life jackets or personal flotation devices, PFDs, on small vessels. They have a hard time believing that we're not already doing all that we can to protect children from these preventable tragedies.

Accidents are the leading cause of death for children in Canada, and not wearing a life jacket is the number one risk factor for drowning while boating.

In 2021, the Drowning Prevention Research Centre Canada found that 80% of people who died in boating-related accidents between 2008 and 2017 were not wearing a life jacket, and another 5% were not wearing one properly.

According to the 2018 Canadian Drowning Report by the Drowning Prevention Research Centre Canada, 67% of children aged five to 14 who died from drowning were not wearing a personal flotation device.

Behind each of these statistics is a life lost that leaves a family and community broken.

Cara McNulty is far too familiar with this type of tragedy. Her 11-year-old son Joshua died in September 2018 when the boat he was on with his father, brother and two other children capsized near Rockport, Ontario. Joshua was not wearing a life jacket. Since then, Cara has been advocating for governments to make wearing a life jacket mandatory for children in small vessels through her initiative Life Jackets for Life. So far, more than 10,000 people have signed her petition. She said about Bill 76, "We're thrilled to hear about this bill. Any progress on mandatory wear legislation is a step in the right direction." I'd like to thank Cara for her advocacy, for her support of this legislation, and for lending me the name of this bill, Lifejackets for Life Act.

The Parry Sound–Muskoka area chair of the Lifesaving Society, Meghan Kirk-Steele, said, "I believe it's a great idea to ensure that children under 12 must wear a PFD when on a boat. We consistently teach all our swimmers to make sure they are all wearing a PFD by the time they get on the dock. Our hope in teaching the children is that they bring it back to their parents so that everyone wears a PFD. Education is the first step to prevention; the more we educate, the more we will see a decline in drownings."

A local organization in my riding, Parry Sound–Muskoka Safe Quiet Lakes, has been surveying people about water safety issues for many years. They have seen a sharp

increase in recent years in the number of people willing to support mandatory PFD regulations. The board of Safe Quiet Lakes recently passed a resolution supporting mandatory life jackets for children 12 and under.

Greg Wilkinson, a former board member of Safe Quiet Lakes, said, “The fact that 87% of drownings in Ontario involve people who were not wearing life jackets tells us all we need to know.”

Another local organization in my riding, the Georgian Bay Association, gave their “strong support for the passage of this bill.”

Pamela Fuselli, the president and CEO of Parachute Canada, said, “Evidence shows that legislation, and the enforcement of legislation, is an effective approach to prevention.” Parachute’s The Cost of Injury in Canada 2021 report showed that drowning was the third-leading cause of death in children aged 14 and younger.

The Lake of Bays Association gave their support for this legislation, saying, “The Lake of Bays Association supports private member’s Bill 76, the Lifejackets for Life Act, which would require all children aged 12 and under to wear a life jacket while on a small pleasure craft in Ontario. We commend MPP Norm Miller for his work on this bill, which will help prevent injury and death to our most vulnerable water lovers.”

Dr. Suzanne Beno, a pediatric emergency physician at SickKids and chair of the Canadian Paediatric Society’s injury prevention committee, also lent her support for this bill, saying, “Life jackets are proven tools for saving lives. Age- and size-appropriate government-approved life jackets should be worn by anyone on a pleasure boat, regardless of age, but are particularly vital for children and non-swimmers.”

The Ottawa Drowning Prevention Coalition says online that “drowning is one of the leading causes of injury-related incidents for Canadian children under the age of five.... Many drowning victims never intended to get wet in the first place. Children under five are especially at risk because they are mobile, very curious and the least capable to self-rescue of any age group.”

I’d now like to talk about the bill itself, explain some of the details and describe how this bill will protect children from accidental drowning while boating. If passed, Bill 76 would make it mandatory for any child aged 12 years or younger to wear a life jacket or PFD while on a pleasure boat nine metres in length or less that is under way, or while being towed behind a boat: for example, water-skiing, wakeboarding or tubing. A pleasure boat is defined as any vessel used or designed to be used in navigating water, propelled by any kind of power, including human power, sail or motorized power, that is used exclusively for pleasure.

The federal rules that lay out what safety equipment is required on boats are based on the length of the boat, and there are different requirements for boats of six metres, six to nine metres, and nine to 12 metres etc. I chose to have this legislation apply to boats nine metres or less because this would cover most runabouts and water-skiing/wakeboarding boats. Personally, as the owner of a 24-foot or 7.3-metre boat that would fall under this requirement, I believe that vessels of this size should be included in the legislation. I know

that even on boats of this size, accidents can happen, and despite the operator's best efforts. I simply could not imagine taking my grandchildren out on this boat without wearing a life jacket.

Under Bill 76, it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to ensure that their child is wearing a PFD or life jacket. If the child is under the supervision of another person 18 years of age or older who is not their parent, then that person is responsible for ensuring the child wears a life jacket. Failing to ensure that child is wearing a life jacket or PFD would result in a fine of no more than \$200 on conviction.

This responsibility is consistent with other provincial safety legislation. For example, the laws surrounding the use of seat belts in cars make it the responsibility of the driver to ensure that all passengers under the age of 16 are wearing seat belts, and the law requiring young cyclists to wear a bike helmet puts the responsibility on the child's parent.

The proposed bill allows for an exception for children in an enclosed cabin, where there is no danger of falling overboard. I have also included a clause to give the government, through the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the ability to create exemptions. I did this because life jackets can interfere with some activities. Life jackets and PFDs have come a long way, but for athletes involved in competitive paddling or rowing, life jackets could get in the way. So, if the bill passes, I would encourage the government to work with groups like Row Ontario to create an exemption for young athletes involved in formal, supervised training or competition.

I mentioned the federal rules around boat safety. Some people might question whether this bill is within provincial jurisdiction. To that I would say that protecting the health and safety of our children is the responsibility of all levels of government. I would also point out the city of Calgary's water safety bylaw, which requires any person in a vessel or other device used as a means of water transportation to wear a life jacket while they are within the boundaries of the city. When this bylaw was challenged based on the idea that waterways fall under federal jurisdiction, Judge Judith Shriar ruled that the bylaw was constitutional.

Looking beyond our borders, this legislation is extremely similar to laws that have been enacted by our neighbours in the United States. In fact, in New Hampshire, the only state in the United States with no laws requiring a driver to wear a seat belt, where you can legally ride a motorcycle without a helmet and where the state's motto is "Live Free or Die," children aged 12 or younger must wear a life jacket in a boat while under way.

All 50 states have laws mandating life jacket use for children, and at least 30 of these states specifically require children aged 12 and under to wear a life jacket while in small recreational vessels. This includes California, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming, among others.

In Ontario, this law could be put in place with no additional cost to boaters. It is already required under the small vessel regulations that boat operators ensure that there is an appropriately sized life jacket or PFD for every passenger. No law-abiding boater should have to go out and purchase additional life jackets. The only difference is that instead of

being stored somewhere on board, the child's life jacket is already on their body and that could make all the difference in the world. In an emergency, there is not always time to grab a life jacket and put it on properly, and this is especially true of children.

As the president and CEO of the Canada Safety Council said, "Too frequently, we see people drown without intending on even dipping their toe in the water, and these types of tragedies are entirely avoidable." If you're in a boat and accidentally fall into the water, there's not always time to locate the life jacket you have on board and put it on. Between 2008 and 2017, 34% of the people known to have not been wearing a PFD when they drowned had one present in the boat, but were unable to put it on at the time of the incident.

At the heart of this bill is children's safety. I love boating on the waters of Parry Sound–Muskoka, and it brings me great joy to share this love with my grandkids. When I do this, it is my responsibility to keep them safe.

Parents, guardians and all adults are responsible for protecting the health and safety of children. This bill, if passed, would clarify that ensuring children in their care wear a life jacket or a PFD while on a small pleasure boat is part of that responsibility. This bill won't prevent all drownings, but I see this as a common-sense law that would reduce the chances of children drowning in boating accidents.

Every child we lose because they were not wearing a life jacket is a tragic and preventable loss of life. It permanently scars parents, families and communities, and it has a terrible impact on our first responders. That is why I'm asking my fellow members to protect children from avoidable harm by supporting Bill 76, the Lifejackets for Life Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know we have a number of speakers who want to speak to this, so I'm not going to take too much time, other than to say that common sense—you would hope that parents and those people in charge of children would actually do what is being proposed in this bill as a matter of course. It's the responsible thing to do. As an adult, when you're in charge of children who are in your care, you should make sure that they're safe; and one of the ways you do that is to make sure they have a valid life jacket on that would, should the occasion arise, allow them to survive being thrown in the lake or river or whatever it might be as a result of whatever incident caused that. So obviously, we're going to support it.

I want to take a couple of minutes to tell a bit of a personal story about what happened to my dad. My dad drowned. He drowned right in front of the cottage—somewhere that he would go to on a regular basis for 40 years. He would get in his boat and he'd go fishing.

You met my dad. I know that Mr. Miller, the member from Parry Sound, knew my dad quite well. The story is, he was wearing a life jacket, but my dad had a life jacket that I used to wear as a child. My dad died when I was in my forties, probably, if not my fifties. My dad had these life jackets that were bought in the early 1960s and decided that they were good enough: "I don't need to buy another life jacket because I've got these life jackets. They're perfectly good. I bought them and I paid good money for them." I used to say, "Dad, you've got to replace those life jackets. If you ever fall in, it will never keep you up." Sure as heck, one

day, he gets in his boat—there's a whole other story to this, but I don't have enough time to get into it. He has a great supper. My mother made probably the best spaghetti sauce ever, and whenever she made that spaghetti sauce, everybody would go running over.

But the point is, he got in his boat and he went out in the front of the lake—I'd say about 600 yards, where we go fishing in front of the cottage—and he sits in his boat. He had one of those folding chairs, those lawn chairs he used to sit on in the boat. I used to say, "Dad, what are you doing? You can't stand straight. You have a problem. You're always sort of doing one of those."

Sure as heck, he gets a bite. The neighbour next door saw him. He got a bite, he stood up in his boat in order to wind in the fish, fell into the lake and drowned, because the life jacket was not sufficient to keep him afloat. My neighbour a couple of doors down, Darcy, jumped on his pontoon boat and was out there as quick as he could be, but 700 yards, 800 yards from his cottage, there was no way he was going to get to him before it was time.

I think one of the things that we have to remember is, if you have a life jacket, you need to make sure that it's current, that it's a proper life jacket for your weight. Don't put a little life jacket on a child if it's not able to hold them up. If you've got a child who's 10 or 11 years old, you've got to make sure that that life jacket is going to be sufficient for that child to be able to survive. I would argue the same for adults.

Let's be wise. Let's make sure that people do the right thing. When it comes to staying safe, please keep a life jacket that will keep you afloat. Don't let happen to you what happened to my dad.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for bringing this initiative forward. One of the comments I'll make is, why didn't I think of this? Norm is always a step ahead of me.

I've had the pleasure of having Dan Mulligan and Norm at my house to watch a hockey game at one time, so I can certainly appreciate Dan's influence on Norm in this regard.

Earlier today we had Bill 51, on which so much time—properly so—was focused on talking about the tremendous and terrible loss of life. Now we have a bill, Bill 76, brought forward by my friend Mr. Miller, that gives us an opportunity to do something that will absolutely save lives—absolutely save the lives of our most vulnerable children in boating circumstances.

I don't know how many people have walked through cemeteries much. I happen to live beside one, so I've spent a lot of time—I'll probably spend more time when my time comes, but as of now, I've spent a lot of time in cemeteries. I've always taken our kids and our grandkids, because there's great education in a cemetery. If you look at the stones in cemeteries, oftentimes, the stones of the old days will say so and so died in 1926, drowned, aged 12 years, aged seven years, aged six years. We lost so many children to drowning at a time when—it wasn't necessarily boating; it was a result of the fact that they didn't know how to swim, possibly.

My grandfather was an undertaker. I have his ledger that records the cause of death for everybody—he was an undertaker from 1910s to the 1950s—and so many children died from drowning. It was probably, other than infant mortality from something else, one of the most common causes.

We have an opportunity here today to pass a bill that will substantially reduce the odds of anybody's child dying from drowning. It's 12 years or younger, nine metres or shorter in a boat—some really, really good parameters. I want to thank Norm for that and also for bringing in the potential for reasonable exemptions, such as competitive operation of a kayak, racing, rowing, that type of thing. We don't want to lose the opportunity for our premier athletes to be exactly that: premier athletes.

When we talk about why this hasn't happened before, it is really actually surprising. I was a canoe ranger in Algonquin Park. Canoe ranger: That was my job. We spent the whole summer there. I never had a life jacket on. I always had one but never put it on. I think about it now and I say, "John, what were you thinking?" Now, I'm older and hopefully, in some ways, I've gotten wiser, and I ask myself, "How could you do that?" I spent the whole summer paddling around in a canoe and never had a life jacket on. But we do learn, and we've learned from all of the tragedies that have befallen us.

So I want to thank Norm. A great example: All 50 states have something that either mirrors this or, if it's not legislation, the Coast Guard themselves have a regulation in place.

We have an opportunity here today that I think will go down as some point in history. I also want to thank Norm for bringing this history, because this will be my last opportunity, I know, to speak to a private member's bill brought forth by my friend Norm Miller from Parry Sound–Muskoka. It's a great way for Norm's last private member's bill to really do something that will impact us all for generations to come. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Ian Arthur: I'd like to thank the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for bringing this bill forward. To echo the response outlined by the member opposite, this was one of the times when I heard a piece of legislation being introduced into this House and I wondered how this could not already be law. That's not a critique of anyone in this room or even those who came before us, but more an instance where you're glad to see something like this corrected going forward.

I know everyone here has heard me say this before, but I grew up in the country, and being on and around water was a huge part of my life. I spent tons of time as a kid outdoors, canoeing, kayaking, powerboating occasionally, on all the wonderful waterways that we have in southeastern Ontario. My parents, among many others—Scout leaders, swimming instructors and lots of other folks—always instilled in me a respect for the water and the critical importance of water safety. Whether it was teaching us how to swim as early as possible, teaching us to keep our distance from the water when parents or adults weren't around, and of course wearing life jackets when we were on the water, be it in tubes, in canoes, whatever it was—out fishing. It was perhaps my parents' inflexible insistence on the

life jackets when we were in the boats that led me to believe that this was already the law, at this point, in the Legislature. Their insistence had reason behind it. It was like sunscreen, or bike helmets, seat belts, car seats. The benefits of life jackets are irrefutable.

There are a couple of stats I want to talk about. They're a bit old, but I'm sure they have not changed—although I do hope this bill is going to change many of them. In 2016 and 2017, there were 54 boating fatalities in Ontario. According to the OPP, life jackets could have been the difference in 42 of those drownings. Either they weren't wearing life jackets or they weren't wearing them properly. That's 78%, Speaker. Nearly four out of five of those deaths would have been preventable with an appropriate life jacket on the person who tragically died.

As an adult, I still continue to spend a lot of time on the water, both recreationally and as a coach for the Queen's rowing team—although I haven't been able to do that for a few years. Water safety is always paramount, but it's easy to forget that that was not always the case for everyone else around you. It's something I grew up with, it's something that is second nature, but for so many in this beautiful province, it's not that.

This brings me to my next point: I think this bill is particularly timely due to the pandemic and COVID and the kind of unexpected effects that the lockdowns and the changes that we have seen over the last two years have had on us. Children have missed, over the last two years, all of the swimming lessons that they would normally go into. That's two full years, and so the consequences are only really being realized now. The Lifesaving Society reported preliminary research—this is still preliminary—that indicated a 13% increase in drownings in 2020, and directly related this to the cancellation of swimming lessons in communities and schools. So it's a particularly timely bill for the member to bring forward, both for COVID and other reasons.

I want to touch on one last point here, before I conclude my remarks, and that is that newcomers are five times more likely to say they can't swim, even though 93% of them also say that they participate in activities in or around the water. This, again, is from 2016, but I expect because of the pandemic this would have only become worse.

So these are just a few of the reasons that this bill is both timely and needed. A life jacket is the difference between a recovery and a rescue. No parent wants to be part of the former. This bill will help ensure that when accidents do happen, the consequences are not, quite so often, dire. I want to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for bringing this forward. We look forward to supporting it. It's timely and needed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's truly a pleasure here to speak today in support of my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka's bill. He was elected in 2001, and here it is in 2022. As my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said, it's truly an honour to speak to perhaps the last piece of legislation he'll pass. I'll note that he's wearing the Royal Stuart tartan, which his father also wore in this House many times while debating legislation and also a budget or two. He has followed his dad, the former Premier, Frank Miller, into this House to help people in our great province.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation does it again, and I'm going to digress just for a minute because, if not, I'll run out of time. But my colleague and friend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke talked a little bit about cemeteries. I just want to get on record, Mr. Speaker, that I hope it's a long time. I hope he can walk that cemetery for another 100 years. But he's a bit of a theatrical fellow. He considers himself a singer. I didn't get the whole undertakers thing, but if you really look at him, I think he might have missed another calling. Maybe there was a hope there: Yak the undertaker.

But at the end of the day, when he said—and he said it, I think, with great reverence—this is a piece of legislation, which is why MPP Miller has brought it to this House, to save lives; that can be preventable, Mr. Speaker. How many people have got the example where those life jackets were under the seat of the boat, or they were in the cabin of the boat, or they were over there. You don't get that extra 25 seconds when something happens in a tragedy to be able to do that, Mr. Speaker.

And I stand here with a bit of self-confession, because I'm a bit of a boat anchor, frankly. I'm a non-swimmer. One of the first things my wife, Michaela, and I did when we had our boys, Zach and Ben—I let them do pretty much whatever they want, because that's who you're supposed to be as a parent: Let them learn and grow. But I was adamant that they had to take swimming lessons. I didn't care if they played hockey, I didn't care if they went into figure skating; I didn't care, really, what they did, but they had to take swimming lessons. Part of that was that I've almost drowned three times. In fact, in the armed forces, I almost drowned with a life jacket on, and that's not a proud thing to say—and that was in a pool, Mr. Speaker, not out in the middle of a lake, where you could have all these other things. So, to me, it was absolutely critical.

When I saw Norm doing this, I was like MPP Yakabuski, saying, "Why didn't I think of this?" This is such a profound but simple piece of legislation that is going to have such impact for the rest of people's lives—the preventable death of a child. And I want to acknowledge, as MPP Miller did, Cara McNulty, founder of Lifejackets for Life, who, obviously, had the saddest happen to her: "We're thrilled to hear about this bill! Any progress on mandatory wear legislation is a step in the right direction."

Mr. Speaker, we know that you have to have the life jacket, but how simplistic is it that you don't have to wear it? And if people won't do that, then that's the time sometimes that we have to put legislation in place to say, "We'll do that because it's the right thing to do." We'll prevent deaths. We'll make sure that those tombstones don't have any more or the undertaker's record doesn't have any more "death by drowning" when a person didn't wear—particularly a child—a life jacket.

At the end of the day, I am hugely honoured to be here to support such a, I think, fabulous piece of legislation. Norm, it's a tribute to what you've done your whole career here. You have always looked for things to help people. I know it's why you and your father got into public service. I've been honoured to serve with you, I'm honoured to support this and I certainly hope everyone in the House will do it. And thank you, at the end of the day, for saving lives. Thank you, Norm.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mme France Gélinas: I'm also a person who thought that was the law before, until he introduced that law.

Let me explain: When I was going to university, I worked for a national park. I used to bring American tourists on canoe trips. It was the regulations of the national park that everybody wears a life jacket. When we would take kids on canoe trips, then it was that they had to wear them all the time, even if they were in the rescue boat or whatever. So I always thought that was the law.

I now live on a lake. We have three kids, seven grandkids. I told every one of them, "It is the law. You have to wear your life jacket," and they all did. I go even further than this. If they don't know how to swim, they're not allowed to come out of the car without me putting a life jacket on them. They keep the life jacket through the whole visit to Grandma, because if they ever go close to the water, I don't have to go out of my mind. And it works—it works.

You all know that I'm also a health care worker. Drowning has been the second or third cause of death in children, forever. We have an opportunity right here, right now, to change this. Every summer, children drown because they're not wearing a life jacket, and we have an opportunity to change this.

My other story is that my husband bought this jet boat. This thing has two motors. You can have one go forward, backward. It turns on a dime. It does all sorts of stuff. We have visitors at our house, so he wants to show off his new boat. Of course, everybody has to put a life jacket on, because France thinks that it's the law that everybody has to wear a life jacket.

France is sitting in the bow. My husband shows them all, "Look, this thing turns on a dime," and it ejected me out of the—no. First he says, "Hold on tight because I'm going to show them." So I'm holding on tight. I'm sitting in the bow of the boat, and this thing turns on a dime and ejects me right out of the boat. I'm now still holding onto something, but I'm underwater, and I'm thinking, "What the heck just happened?" But I had a life jacket on, so I popped up to the front—everybody in the boat was saying "Ah." Everybody went home really quickly. My husband and I put the boat up for sale. We do not have this jet boat anymore. Nobody will be ejected out of the boat anymore.

I am also a competitive rower. I appreciate the fact that there will be exceptions for rowers. But I must tell you that whenever we train, even if we have a rescue boat with us, we all wear a special life jacket made for rowers. The only time that we should be excluded from wearing a life jacket is when we compete. During the competition, there is always a lifeboat that follows us and we could be exempt from wearing a life jacket. The rest of the time, when kids train and adults train, we should always wear a life jacket.

I will take the last few minutes to say a huge thank you to the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka, the MPP who represents just south of my riding—I'm always a little bit confused where my riding ends and yours starts, but we make it work—for bringing very meaningful pieces of legislation forward. I know for a fact that this bill will save lives. It will

protect children. It will avoid real tragedy for many families. Losing a child destroys a family. We don't want anybody to ever have to go through this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Smith: I want to thank the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, as well, for this bill. It has been said here a number of times already—I didn't realize that this wasn't the law. When he approached me about it and asked if I would be willing to speak on behalf of it, I'm sure he was thinking, "MPP Smith, you're in Peterborough–Kawartha. You've got more than 100 lakes in the Kawarthas. It's a great thing for you to do."

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Smith: Yes, there are swamps. If you ever come into God's country, we've got two things: We've got drumlins and swamps. There's lots of swampland.

I didn't grow up in Peterborough. I actually grew up in Wellington, Prince Edward county. Being around the water, being involved in boating is something I've done my entire life.

Just to put into perspective what boating has been for me, when I passed kindergarten, the present I got from my father—

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Smith: It was the best seven years of my life.

When I passed kindergarten, the gift I got from my father was a 14-foot cedar punt. From age five on, I've had a boat; I don't have one at the moment. I never realized that you didn't have to have your life jacket on. I always had the life jacket in it.

The first boat I remember of my father's was a 16-foot Sunfish with a 35-horse. I remember this one, really, because my mother's birthday is June 10—and Dad had always wanted to upgrade the motor to a 50-horse from a 35-horse. We were leaving church one Sunday afternoon, and my father pulled up in his red pickup and said to Mum, "I have your birthday present in the back." It was June 10. He pulled down the tailgate and there was a 50-horse Merc that he bought for her birthday for his boat.

When we were boating, though, all of the life jackets were either shoved up in the cubby underneath or under the seats. I never thought about it.

When I was water skiing, Dad was always adamant that we had to have the ski belt on—just a foam belt that wrapped around your waist because it would help you float while he was getting ready to take off to pull you up. It wasn't that it would save you if you fell; it helped you float at the waist so that you could get out of the water easier when you were learning how to ski.

The only time I wore a life jacket as a kid was when it was cold. You put the life jacket on so that you weren't cold while you were going to wherever you were going fishing. I just can't

imagine why we've never done this. Why is it in 2022 that this is being introduced? How come nobody ever thought of this before? This really should be a no-brainer.

The member from Kingston and the Islands talked about how 84% of the deaths from drowning could have been avoided. My uncle is an OPP officer. He served on the marine unit, and the one thing he said to me that has always stuck out in my mind is that most of the time, when you pull somebody out of the water and they've drowned, their zipper is undone. If you were wearing a life jacket and you fell out while you were standing there taking a leak, you would've lived. It's really simple things like that that make a big, big difference.

So I thank the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for bringing this bill forward, because this is something that actually will have a legacy, that will mean something. We can't measure the number of people who are not going to die, but we know there will be people who will live when they fall in the water because as a kid they were forced to wear a life jacket, and then as an adult they will continue wearing it. There was pushback on seat belts when they first came out; all of us wear seat belts as a result of it. This is the same type of thing. As you start as a kid wearing a life jacket, you'll wear it for the rest of your life.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norman Miller: Let me begin by thanking my OLIP interns, who have been working on this. I'm lucky enough to have two interns this year. Clare Simon, who is my current intern, wrote that speech—I was doing a bit of speed-reading to get through it, but an excellent job with the speech—and Melody Greaves did most of the research on this bill. Thank you to both of them for doing a great job.

As well, I'd like to thank Cara McNulty, who gave us the name for the bill, the Lifejackets for Life Act. She was also very kind and sent over doughnuts to my office this afternoon, some of which are in the side room for those who want to eat them, so thanks, Cara. And my good friend Dan Mulligan was the one who brought up the idea of this bill and was fairly persuasive that this is something that needed to be done, from the perspective of an OPP helicopter pilot.

But I also want to thank all of the members who spoke. You brought up some good points, the members from Timmins, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Kingston and the Islands, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Peterborough–Kawartha and Nickel Belt. I like your rules for your grandkids. I grew up around a lake, and having been rescued a few times before, at a young age when I couldn't swim, it then became that I had to wear a life jacket all the time, no matter what, for when I happened to walk off a dock etc. Anyway, I really appreciate your support.

I did have the opportunity to take the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound flying in a seaplane this year. I had a life jacket on him, and only after the flight he tells me that he can't swim. He should've warned me about that before the flight, but he did have a life jacket on for that seaplane flight.

Anyway, thank you all for your comments. I really appreciate it—some good thoughts there. I appreciate your support on this bill.