

reform the federal EARP. I look forward to this legislation and sincerely hope that it will adequately address the problem I have described.

• (1730)

While on the topic of the proposed legislation, I would like to make a few comments on a story that appeared in the December 1, 1989 edition of *The Ottawa Citizen*. This article, which was based on leaked documents, made the claim that the environment minister, and I quote:

—appeared to be narrowing the scope of new environmental assessment legislation so that fewer projects will come under review. While this may or may not be true, it is important to understand that the cabinet has not yet begun consideration of the bill and therefore it is quite premature and inappropriate to comment on the substance of the legislation. When the legislation is tabled in this House there will be ample time given to all members to debate its content.

In the meantime members with an interest in this legislation have the opportunity to make their own views known through debate on the motion before us.

As my colleague from Fraser Valley West stated in opening the debate on this motion, “the government will examine the content of this debate and choose from the ideas of members of this House. The final draft of this legislation has not been prepared and therefore this is the perfect opportunity to bring forward positive suggestions”.

A goal of the motion before us is to clarify the current disorder that exists in EARP. It would minimize duplication and would save a great deal of time and effort.

I have had the honour of serving this House for 17 years, and I can assure Your Honour that it is always a pleasure to see proposals that would eliminate bureaucratic red tape and efficiency. For this reason alone the motion before us is a very positive one.

At this point I would like to explain why I personally support the need for a statutory process of environmental assessment. As you all know, I have dedicated a great deal of my time and energy to the fight against acid rain. Most recently I had the honour of serving as the chairman of the special committee on acid rain in the last Parliament.

Private Members' Business

One of the great difficulties of this fight was that we were engaged in after the fact prevention. If a system of before the fact prevention had been in place in the past, we could have possibly avoided a great deal of the acid rain problem. For this reason I support the implementation of a statutory environmental assessment process. Such a process offers the kind of preventive measure we vitally need in this country to avoid future environmental problems.

Now I would like to turn to a matter which has created much discussion and concern in Canada and yes, indeed, around the world, this being the issue of sustainable development. Ever since the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development which is most often referred to as the Brundtland commission, there has been an enormous amount of rhetoric on this issue. However the problem is that the rhetoric has far outdistanced any substantive action on this very important matter.

I must admit that this government is not guiltless in this regard. I am certain that while a great many Canadians have heard discussion about sustainable development, a large proportion are unsure of what it really is; perhaps even some in this House. For this reason I think it is important to read into the record a quote from the Brundtland commission report:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The report stated that there was:

—the possibility for a new era of economic growth, one that must be based on policies that sustain and expand the environmental resource base.

I sincerely hope that this is true. However this hope for the future is based on the condition that we now take decisive political action that would enable us to begin managing our resources in a manner which ensures both sustainable human progress and, more important, human survival.

This condition illustrates the importance of debate on the motion before us. Motion 485 provides members on all sides of this House with the opportunity to play a role in bringing about the decisive political action referred to by the Brundtland commission.

By standing up in this House and voting in favour of this motion, we will be sending a clear message to the people of Canada, and indeed the world, that we are