

Private Members' Business

• (1745)

I implore the government and the Minister of the Environment to pursue that approach. I also encourage the member for Davenport in his legislation, should it go farther than this point in the House, to be willing to look at amendments to his bill that might respect the rights and interests of land owners in this whole situation.

[Translation]

Mrs. Pierrette Ringuette—Maltais (Madawaska—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity today to speak to Bill C-275, an act respecting the protection and rehabilitation of endangered and threatened species, standing in the name of the hon. member for Davenport.

[English]

The paddlefish, the swift fox and the black-footed ferret have one thing in common: They no longer exist in the wild in Canada.

[Translation]

As for the Labrador duck, the sea mink and the blue walleye, all three have ceased to exist.

The Eastern cougar, the Salish sucker, the right whale, the white Prairie gentian and the spotted owl are endangered in Canada.

[English]

The white-headed woodpecker, the blue ash, the western Atlantic harbour porpoise and the spiny softshell turtle are threatened. The polar bear, the eastern bluebird, the orange-spotted sunfish, the pug-nose minnow, the prairie rose, the blue whale and the trumpeter swan are vulnerable.

[Translation]

Canada now has 244 animal and plant species on the endangered list. These species are affected by the loss of essential habitat, excessive harvesting, introduction of exotic species, climatic change and contamination by toxic products.

[English]

The time has clearly come for the federal government to release a legislative proposal for a Canadian endangered species protection act. The government has decided to ask for public comment on this proposal before introducing a bill in Parliament because it wants as much input as possible from as many Canadians as possible.

The document is short and straightforward. We have eliminated as much of the legalese as we could in order to allow Canadians to participate in constructive discussions before the final drafting of the bill.

[Translation]

Protection of endangered species is the responsibility of all groups in our society and each and every citizen in this country. We need legislation that will make the Canadian public feel directly involved.

The bill before the House today seeks to regulate the following activities: the killing, wounding, capture, collecting or disturbing of endangered species, including plants, birds, fish, mammals and their embryos. The bill also seeks to establish Canadian controls over the purchase, sale and international trade in endangered species. To me it is quite clear that Canadians want the maximum penalty imposed on anyone who tries to make money by unlawfully importing or exporting endangered species.

[English]

The committee on the status of endangered wildlife in Canada, an arm's length scientific body, would assess the species at risk on an annual basis. The Minister of the Environment would be required to establish a list of species at risk in areas of federal jurisdiction.

Response statements outlining a plan of action would be mandatory. Recovery plans, if required, would be prepared within two years for endangered species and within three years for threatened species.

The proposal would also permit emergency measures to be taken to conserve and protect species requiring the equivalent of emergency ward treatment.

[Translation]

The proposed legislation would authorize the Minister of the Environment to enter into financing or conservation agreements in partnership with other governments, agencies and property owners for the purpose of preserving endangered species.

The bill would also provide for strict enforcement and severe penalties.

[English]

The federal government has a responsibility to set a benchmark for effective endangered species legislation in all of Canada's jurisdictions, but that is not enough. We also have a responsibility to work with the provinces and the territories to ensure a comprehensive national approach to the protection of endangered species in all parts of Canada. The federal government is committed to doing its part in this shared enterprise. Acting alone however, the federal government cannot come close to solving all of the problems.

• (1750)

[Translation]

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick for previously adopting legislation to protect endangered species. I am convinced