

*Government Orders*

particular piece of land and its concerns with respect to what will happen if that is turned into a housing project.

I think that is typical of the concerns that Canadians right across this country have with the environmental impact and environmental concerns relating to housing projects and all sorts of other kinds of projects that may be carried out by the federal government, any of the agencies or Crown corporations of the federal government or by the private sector.

I think it is particularly important that all of us bear in mind the environment when dealing with a situation like this. Fortunately, in the case of this particular piece of property, CMHC has received a report from Winters and Associates, who did this assessment, which concludes that in their opinion as professionals in this field, there are no rare and/or significant environmental features located on CMHC lands. Therefore, no special consideration is required during the construction.

That is an opinion of some professional appraisers, and it may or may not be accepted by the general public, or by environmentalist organizations such as the Ottawa-Carleton Field Naturalists Club. That assessment and the procedure that is being followed is one that is being followed under the present guidelines and the present environmental assessment regulations that are in place as far as the federal government is concerned.

Of course, we know that as a result of at least two court decisions and concerns expressed on all sides of this House and by Canadians across the country, there is not the kind of confidence in the current rules and regulations that you and I believe Canadians should have in the environmental assessment process that is currently in place for the federal government and for federal government agencies. That is demonstrated as well, to my mind, by a recent survey that I carried out with some of my constituents. I asked them a variety of questions relating to the environment. I asked them a series of questions, eight questions in fact, and asked them to express their opinion on whether they were concerned, unconcerned or very concerned about those eight different areas of the environment. I guess I was not surprised but the results that came back to me indicated that a minimum of 55 per cent of my constituents were very concerned about every one of those environmental questions.

• (1840)

I think that certainly illustrates for me, and I think illustrates for all of us, the feeling that all of our constituents have, particularly these days, about the state of the environment, their concerns with the environment and their feeling that we have a responsibility on their behalf to make sure that the environment is protected and that it is cleaned up where there are pollution problems.

In the light of those concerns, and in the light of the fact that the federal government has a vast number of projects and undertakings which impact on the environment—whether it be the development of land for housing or whether it be some other projects which are intended obviously to be for the public benefit and for the public good, but at the same time intended to bear in mind the concerns which all of us have in relation to the environment—it is important to assess the bill that is before us and to bear in mind, at the same time, the progress and the path that has been taken over a number of years, not only by the present government but by past governments as well with respect to trying to deal with the assessment of projects of this sort as far as the environment is concerned.

You are aware, as I am, Mr. Speaker, that the first environmental assessment process was put in place by the Government of Canada in 1974. That was updated in 1977. In 1984 the present process was put into place. That process was the environmental assessment review process guidelines that were issued, as you will remember Mr. Speaker, by Order in Council. When CMHC or any other federal Crown corporation or any other federal department goes to proceed with one of these major undertakings, they are faced at the present time with these Order in Council guidelines that were put into place in 1984.

Those guidelines do not have the kind of teeth that we and Canadians are looking for in the year 1990. That of course is why the government has introduced the Canadian environmental assessment bill, Bill C-78, the one that we are debating at the moment.

I think it is very significant to point out the differences between that old set of guidelines and the current bill to show what the changes are that have taken place and the way in which this process is being strengthened and strengthened enormously by the bill that is before the