

*Private Members' Business*

allow other members of Parliament to meet with those individuals who were concerned.

I want to say that the presentation they gave at that time was very impressive. I do not think there was a member of Parliament who left that reception not thoroughly convinced that governments had to act to protect this ecosystem.

I want to assure you at the beginning of this debate that my colleagues in the New Democratic Party caucus fully and unconditionally support this motion. We urge that there not be a prolonged debate, that the matter is so urgent and so apparent and so obvious that it could be dealt with prior to two o'clock this afternoon. We would be prepared to give it that kind of support today.

I find, for the very reasons that the two speakers before me made in their speeches to the House, that what we are debating here today is unacceptable. If the developers and those who wish to destroy this valley manage to accomplish their intentions it would be obscene. I cannot find language to use that would be any less strong than that. It would be an absolute obscenity to allow developers to build a highway through this valley, or to build multi-million dollar homes in this valley. The final obscenity would be to place a garbage dump in this valley.

The Rouge River Valley on its own is a wondrous thing. It is the only natural wildlife area in a place like metropolitan Toronto. It has wildlife and fauna that cannot be found anywhere else in Canada. Yet there are forces out there which wish to destroy it, all in the name of development.

Next month I will celebrate 10 years of being in this House. In that 10-year period I have seen a new awareness in Canada and, indeed, globally and a growing and grave concern for the environment. After all that has been said about the greenhouse effect, about what we do to rivers and lakes and our air, when we use them as garbage dumps to dispose of our waste, we find ourselves standing here today debating this very matter.

We are debating it because we have a provincial government in Ontario that campaigned in two elections on environmental matters, made itself out to be the protector of the environment and yet is prepared to listen to arguments such as we have heard here today that would destroy a natural habitat right in the centre of

the major metropolitan Toronto area. It boggles the mind. Any way that one looks at this it presents at best a puzzled kind of rash reasoning. It defies normal human behaviour.

I do not want to take up too much time because I think both members who spoke before me said as much as I could possibly say. I do want to say that this matter is so urgent that the federal government has recognized and, indeed, has made a proposal to the Government of Ontario to start negotiations on how to save the Rouge Valley system.

All I can say here is that I urge the Ontario government and people in this Chamber who have any influence with members of that government to urge them to sit down with their counterparts at the federal, municipal and regional government levels to come to a sensible solution to save the Rouge Valley system.

• (1340)

**Mr. Bill Attewell (Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and support this Private Member's Motion introduced by the member for Scarborough Centre on the advisability of entering into negotiations with the Government of Ontario to establish a wilderness reserve or heritage park to protect the environmental uniqueness of the Rouge River Valley system in Scarborough.

Although I wholeheartedly support this motion, I want to stress the importance of not confining the debate to the geographic area of Scarborough. Half a mile south of the village of Vandorf where I live lies the most northerly headwaters of the Rouge Valley system. Indeed, nearly half of the Rouge River Valley system is in my riding of Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville. The Rouge watershed stretches from Richmond Hill and Stouffville in the north through the town of Markham and south into Scarborough where the Rouge River empties into Lake Ontario.

Like any chain, the Rouge system is only as strong as the sum of its parts. When one link in the chain is threatened, the survival of the entire system is threatened. The question we must ask ourselves then is: can we preserve a healthy river system within a growing urban area? This presents a great challenge to all politicians, planners, developers and residents. The key is to ensure that all development activity is kept well