

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. I would hope that the Hon. Member would address the Chair.

• (1710)

Mr. Benjamin: Certainly. I would also ask my colleague to comment on any differences he might be aware of as between standards put in place by the Province of Ontario, or any other province, and those that are put in place at the federal level.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member for Spadina (Mr. Heap), in response.

Mr. Crosbie: What about the Hon. Member over here?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I shall recognize the Hon. Member for Richmond—South Delta (Mr. Siddon) after the Hon. Member for Spadina answers the question.

Mr. Heap: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I did not make myself clear. I was suggesting that the Hon. Minister of Fisheries deal with the question raised by the Hon. Member for Comox—Powell River (Mr. Skelly); and if it is in order, I would be glad to have him make that response now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): That is not in order. However, it would be in order for the Hon. Minister to comment on your speech now, if in fact he has any questions or comments in relation to it.

The Hon. Minister for Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Siddon), on questions or comments.

Mr. Siddon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond—

Mr. Benjamin: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Siddon: —to respond to a matter—

Mr. Benjamin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): We are now at the stage of questions and comments in relation to the speech made by the Hon. Member for Spadina (Mr. Heap)—

Mr. Benjamin: That is right, and the Minister neither put a question nor made a comment.

An Hon. Member: If you would sit down and listen, you will hear a question or comment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. I have recognized the Hon. Minister on a question or comment, and I would ask that he be permitted to proceed without interruption.

The Hon. Member for Regina West has been a Member of this House for many years, and he knows the process.

Had I seen the Minister rise in his place before recognizing the Hon. Member for Regina West, I would have given him the courtesy of asking him to proceed first.

Canadian Environmental Protection Act

I shall now recognize the Hon. Minister on a question or comment in relation to the speech already made by the Hon. Member for Spadina, following which I shall recognize the Hon. Member for Regina West.

Mr. Benjamin: But he is only asking his question now. I have already asked my question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Minister, on a question or comment.

Mr. Siddon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to have this opportunity to make a comment on the important and exceptional speech made by the Hon. Member for Spadina (Mr. Heap) in respect of Bill C-74, a Bill which will establish, for the first time in Canadian history, an important regime for centralizing the management of the Canadian environment. We risk further degradation of the environment and irreversible damage if we do not soon bring abuse of the environment under control.

This Government, and particularly the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan), attach such importance to the problems of the environment that we have brought forward Bill C-74, the aim of which is to create a more effective regime for ensuring a balance between necessary industrial development and the need to protect the environment.

As was pointed out by the Hon. Member for Comox—Powell River (Mr. Skelly), in responding to the remarks of the Hon. Member for Spadina, there was indeed a serious spill of sulphuric acid, in a fairly concentrated form, into Discovery Passage, near Campbell River, British Columbia. This “leak”, as it was called by the offending company, apparently occurred on or about the 20th of March last, but was not reported to my officials until around April 20, with the report coming from a Member of the Pulp and Paper Workers Union. Within two days of that report coming in, a proper account of the incident was given by Crown Forest Products, the company in question, to the B.C. Department of the Environment.

Under the federal Fisheries Act, effluent offences, or alleged effluent offences, are administered by the Minister of the Environment, with the actual task of ensuring adherence to the applicable standards being delegated to the provincial governments. In this case, there appears to have been a serious discharge of something in the order of 31 tonnes of sulphuric acid, not 35 tonnes, as mentioned by the Hon. Member. The incident is under intensive investigation at the present time.

I am very concerned that a discharge of such magnitude could have gone unreported for a full month, and it is a matter in which I am taking a very intense interest. The area in question is a very important one in so far as the fishery is concerned, both recreational and commercial.