

Government Orders

really do an environmental assessment. We learned how to conduct public hearings. We learned how to fund interveners and what an advantage, not a disadvantage, that was to governments and the process to have all broad points of view.

Let me conclude by saying that we have done great things in the world on the environment. We are pioneering. We have a bill to which we in this party, who are committed to the environment, proposed 111 amendments. There is another amendment on the floor which we think will strengthen the bill. We ask the government and the House to support this amendment.

Remember what the students of Sir Frederick Banting Junior Secondary School said, that the environment is the key issue in the modern world.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Madam Speaker, my remarks will be very brief. I want to compliment the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment and all committee members on this work.

I would like to put forward to members that there is confusion from time to time in the overlapping jurisdictions. I want to bring this down to my own community in Toronto where we have three rivers that flow through the centre of our city; the Don River, the Rouge River and the Humber River. They flow into Lake Ontario which is a lake that we share with the United States. These are the most polluted rivers in all of Canada.

For years we have had the toxic and biological waste from the largest city in Canada flowing down these rivers into Lake Ontario. They are now just chemical cauldrons.

It seems that because of the overlapping jurisdictions from the municipality to the province, to the conservation boards and ultimately, because of the Great Lakes, the federal jurisdiction, there is always the pointing of fingers at each other, that the municipality is responsible for a certain facet and then ultimately the province. We do report after report but there is never, ever a real final

action plan or the resources to begin reclaiming these rivers.

I hope that as we go through the various phases of this bill that we can somehow give the national government a clear cut responsibility for acting when we have overlapping jurisdictions on a particular environmental disaster. Yet there does not seem to be the will of those like the province, those bodies responsible to take action.

I cite another example from two years ago in Barrier Lake, just three hours north of us, where it was obvious the clear-cutting that was done in that area was beyond the sustainable development definition. The Algonquins of Barrier Lake could not get the support of the province to stop the clear-cutting. It was a clear cut case where the province should have stepped in and stopped it.

Yet, we as a national government, other than moral suasion, were not really in a position to do anything about it. We have a similar situation in Alberta with the pulp and paper mills going into the Athabasca River region.

My concern is that there should be some clear definition so that the national government can step in and put a much more aggressive position forward, the ultimate position when the operating authorities fail to act.

I hope in committee that specific examples like that can be addressed. Quite frankly, if there is one frustration I face it is that every month I get approached from constituents in my riding asking: "What specific action is taking place on the clean-up of the Don River? What is the national government doing about it?" You turn around and say: "It is the province that is supposed to be doing something about it". The province says: "It is the municipality". We, as a national government, seem to have either relinquished or do not have that final thrust.

I hope that we can have a clear-cut definition of our responsibility by the time we bring this bill to its final resting place.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Madam Speaker, I would just like to reinforce to the committee what the hon. member for Broadview—Greenwood has just said. I have the same problem in my riding of Parkdale—High Park.

Every summer, when the temperatures reach 80 and 90 degrees, the beaches on Lake Ontario are closed all along Mississauga, Toronto, et cetera. Just when the