

I will conclude by telling this House that after some of the most extensive consultations between Canadians and the federal government, my colleague, the Minister of the Environment, incorporated several key amendments to the bill which is before us today.

These amendments, in my opinion, strengthen the assessment process. They increase the clarity and the effectiveness of the process and they respond to the very specific and expressed needs of Canadians.

First of all, I am pleased to be able to tell the House that this bill no longer talks in terms of "balancing" environmental and economic goals. Instead, this out-moded concept has been succeeded by the more realistic philosophy of integrating these complementary objectives.

We feel that using this more positive definition of sustainable development will result in assessments that are based on more modern environmental principles.

We have also proposed the term "comprehensive study" to replace "mandatory study" in order to lay to rest the misconception that if a project were not on the mandatory list it would not be assessed.

It is important for Canadians to realize that those projects likely to have significant adverse environmental effects will be subject to broader and more in depth studies. This amendment and the wider definition of project the government has proposed will allow the assessment process to focus on those activities and those undertakings which warrant closer scrutiny while avoiding unnecessary or frivolous examination.

Under these amendments native concerns will be better accommodated as well. We are proposing that both "traditional aboriginal uses of the land" and "heritage resources" be included under the definition of "environmental effect" in assessing projects.

Some Canadians expressed wariness at the use of discretionary language in the act and suggested that it was an attempt by the government to court-proof this legislation. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

Nevertheless, in response to this concern we have removed as much of the discretionary language as we possibly could.

### *Government Orders*

We also removed the double standard, or potential double standard which was suggested by the terms "significant" and "serious." Significant environmental effect is a term now used throughout the bill. Significant is a sole threshold level in the United Nations Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a trans-boundary context to which Canada is a party and which we would hope to ratify in the near future.

Another issue which was raised in the course of our consultations was the absence in this legislation of the need for and alternatives to projects. The amendments which we have proposed give the Minister of the Environment power to include these and any other appropriate factors in an assessment.

Just prior to closing I would also like to refer to one additional amendment if I am permitted to do so.

The government has proposed amending that section of the bill which deals with mediators and review panels so as to include guidelines for their selection and appointment. This amendment responds directly to those environmental and industry groups and associations which had underlined the need for stated criteria to ensure high standards for mediation and panel review.

As a result of these amendments and others to which I think some of my colleagues will be speaking during the course of third reading debate, we have before us today legislation which will give this country an environmental assessment process which speaks to the express needs of Canadians, individuals, business, industry, and governments alike. It is legislation in which we can all take pride.

In closing, because this is indeed for me the closing moments in what has been a very long and on occasion somewhat protracted process, I would like to say I am very pleased to have been able to participate in this process.

I echo the words of many of my colleagues as expressed earlier that indeed when we are talking in terms of protection of the environment we are today speaking to the concerns of Canadians which perhaps are more significant and certainly more clearly expressed than they have ever been before.