

Government Orders

• (1610)

I wonder whether the hon. member could tell me whether he realizes that once again, the Quebec government's rights are being violated and once again, the Government of Quebec is objecting. Remember, this is not a separatist government, this is Robert Bourassa's government objecting through Environment Minister Pierre Paradis, who is not known as a sovereignist.

I would like the hon. member to tell me whether he is aware of what is being said about this in Quebec City and whether the government intends to wait before proceeding with the final stages of this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Stevenson: Madam Speaker, I was somewhat surprised at the nature of the press report of this morning relating to the statement from the Quebec government. Certainly, while I was chair of the pre-study committee, the committee sent out a notice to all individuals and groups across Canada, including ministers of environment for all provinces and territories, that we were holding public hearings and inviting anyone who wished to appear at those hearings, and stating that we would be pleased to hear from them.

The minister of the environment for the Northwest Territories chose to appear and the minister of the environment for British Columbia, who at that time was chair of the Canadian Committee for Resource and Environment Ministers, appeared on behalf of the ministers of environment across Canada.

They expressed the concerns of their respective groups at that time. Indeed, the chair of the Committee of Environment Ministers brought with him a number of amendments to the bill, some of which were accepted in one form or another in the new legislation. Certainly, there has been ample opportunity over the last many months for Quebec to state its concerns. I am quite confident that there have been bilateral meetings along the way between federal officials and provincial officials and I would think between the federal minister and the

Quebec minister of the environment on this bill through its development.

The bill as it is written today reflects the differences which exist from province to province in the provincial environmental assessment legislation. In the provision for joint panels, where they are necessary, that sort of flexibility is written into the current act to adjust for the unique situations from province to province.

As a federal government, it is our obligation to assess projects that are being funded by federal tax dollars. One could not consider a situation where federal taxpayers' dollars were going to projects in any part of Canada with some environmental implication and the federal government would choose to ignore the assessment of those projects.

It seems to me the bill is adequate as written for the situation at hand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Madam Speaker, Bill C-13 provides a framework or structure for procedures which I hope will be improved as the legislation is implemented. Although it does not respond to all the concerns of Canadians, it describes an environmental assessment process, which is a significant step but does not, I repeat, does not specify which projects will be subject to assessment and how the legislation will be implemented. We will get that when the Governor in Council has had a chance to look at the regulations and as soon as a thorough and, I imagine, complex study of the appropriate regulations is published.

These regulations may establish which projects will be subject to environmental assessment, unlike the present bill which does not provide that information. They will also tell us what decision will set the environmental assessment process into motion and how other levels of government will be involved, and this may answer one of the concerns of my friends in the Bloc québécois. For instance, how will aboriginal governments be involved? I do not know. I do not know yet. That will depend on the regulations.