

Oral Questions

Alberta, the project may well be completed before the court finally rules, making the assessment no more than a coroner's inquest.

Has the Minister asked the Prime Minister to call the Premier of Saskatchewan to ask for a delay, to use the political process instead of the courts, and delay the project to allow for irreparable harm to be assessed? Or, is irreparable harm as acceptable to the Prime Minister as it apparently is to Premier Devine?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, as I have answered to some of my colleagues across the way earlier today, we are taking every legal step necessary to ensure that the full review process be conducted.

I fully understand that there are elements in this case which suggest that we can launch a successful appeal and allow the process of full environmental review to be completed. That is what we are engaged in and we hope to be able to succeed in that effort.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, the Rafferty-Alameda project is being constructed under a second federal licence under the International Rivers Improvement Act.

Does the Minister really expect the Canadian public to believe that the federal government has no power to amend, to suspend, or to rescind the federal licence, keeping in mind that this is the second one that has been issued by the federal government, in order to allow for an assessment of irreparable harm to the Canadian environment? Does the Minister expect anyone in Canada to believe that irreparable harm means anything and then the government does nothing?

• (1440)

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the facts in this matter are very clear with respect to the licence. I mentioned them earlier and I will mention them again.

The licence was issued. The licence contains a number of conditions. In fact, I believe there are some 22 conditions to the licence. All of them, to date, have been respected and it is totally illegal for the Government of Canada to move unilaterally to revoke the licence at this point.

[Translation]

ENERGY

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, and it concerns Canada's sovereignty in matters relating to our energy policy.

[English]

For the second time in as many weeks, Premier Bob Rae has sold out Canada by giving provincial approval for the takeover of Consumers Gas by British Gas.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Copps: I would like to ask the federal Minister of Industry if he is prepared to step in where Bob Rae fears to tread? Is he prepared to use his considerable powers, under Investment Canada, to block the takeover of Consumers Gas by British Gas?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to say to the hon. member for Hamilton East that I will step in, not only with Premier Rae, but with former Premier Peterson who accepted the deal before he was defeated.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I can only anticipate that the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology will follow my advice of last week and instruct Investment Canada to block the sale. If he does intend to block the sale, can he give us his instructions to Investment Canada?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, of course not, because we consider, as did the Government of Ontario twice, that foreign investors are not a sin for Canada because they can provide a lot of benefits. It was considered as such by both governments in Ontario and we think that they were right. That is why we accepted the deal.

My colleague, the hon. member for Hamilton East, should know that investments are good for Canada and we would hope that she will support that kind of deal.