

Supply

This motion is put forth as an humble attempt to address the sustainable development agenda of the House. The clock is ticking and we are running out of time. There is an urgency, and the public is aware of the urgency. I think the public is way ahead of us in its thinking. Politicians who do not listen to the public are not politicians for very long. We must address this issue. We have to be courageous with the type of decisions that we have to make. We have to put aside partisan interests and stop trying to make political points on one another. We have to change. We as human beings do not like to change. It is a scary thing to change, but it is necessary, or we are all doomed. On that light note I will bring my remarks to a conclusion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On questions or comments, the Hon. Member for Dauphin—Swan River.

Mr. White: I listened with interest to the comments of the Hon. Member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. I would like to make a brief comment and also ask a question.

I am fortunate to come from an area in rural Manitoba where we have clean air and clean water. The people I represent have come to realize, as have all Canadians, that the number one issue that we are facing as Canadians and as residents of the planet earth is the protection and preservation of our environment. I believe that it will be the number one issue in the future, starting now, as a matter of fact.

The Hon. Member talked about going beyond rhetoric and the fact that politicians cannot only talk about environmental concerns, that there has to be action. I have to take the Hon. Member to task on that comment, because there has been talk from this Government and also action. There was a federal environmental assessment and review process on the Sea Island fuel barge facility where it was concluded by the panel that the Minister of Transport unconditionally rejected the proposal submitted by the North Fraser Harbour Commission. That is an example of where the federal Government has taken action.

Up until the spring of 1988 Manitoba had an NDP Government. We had a perfect example with the NDP Government in Manitoba of all talk and no action. A group of environmental organizations did an assessment, province by province, of all the provincial Governments in late 1987 or early 1988. The New Democratic Government in Manitoba ranked dead last. That is a perfect

example of a Government that was all talk and no action. I have a question I would like to ask. I do not think that there is any Member in this House that would disagree with the fact that we have to develop alternate sources of energy.

• (1200)

The Hon. Member mentioned in her remarks that there is a contradiction in spending the money that is being spent on the fossil fuel megaprojects. I would like to ask the Member what we as a nation would do if we did not invest in the megaprojects and there was a time gap between a future serious fuel shortage and the development of a viable alternate source of energy? What would we as Canadians do if we were faced with a time gap if we quit investing in the fossil fuel megaprojects?

Ms. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question and applaud the Member in a spirit of non-partisanship for any action that the Government takes on reducing the damage to our environment. I welcome the example that he has given to this House.

Addressing his question about the time lag, I realize that we have to wean ourselves away from fossil fuels. We cannot do it overnight. The examples I have of program cuts illustrate that at the time we are giving money to subsidize those megaprojects, there have been cuts to the programs such as Canada Oil Substitution Program, that went in 1986, the Canadian Home Insulation Program, that went in 1986, the Canadian Energy Audit Program, that went in 1986, the Atlantic Energy Conservation Investment Program, that went in 1986, the Solar Energy Demonstration Program, that was gone in 1989, the Remote Community Demonstration Program, that went in 1989, the Forest Industry Renewable Energy Program, that was gone in 1989, Industrial Conversion Assistance Program, that went in 1987.

So my answer is that we have to change our thinking. I realize that a weaning away process is necessary but we also have to start funding other types of program so that real alternatives are viable.

Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to indicate to the House my pleasure in having an opportunity to address this very important issue. I would like to thank the Hon. Member for the motion she has presented today and for the spirit in which it is presented.