

Oral Questions

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): A supplementary question to the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of the Environment cannot answer how he will get people to serve on this environment review panel when the last one had to quit because they were not meeting their own conditions.

When it comes to tough decisions about the environment, we know whose side this government is on. First of all, in the Point Aconi case, the government chose, not the people of Canada but Senator Buchanan. The government had to decide between proper environmental review of Hibernia—

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party to please put her question.

Ms. McLaughlin: The government has also had to decide between Alcan and the people of—

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to put her question.

Ms. McLaughlin: My question to the Minister of the Environment is this. In each instance, the Minister of the Environment has chosen the side of his corporate friends. Whose side is this government on for the environment of Canada, the people or the corporate interests?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I can be very clear. This government stands for the environment; this government stands for sustainable development; this government follows what the Brundtland commission report proposed; and, this government, in the case that is being raised right now, has stated very clearly that the government will take the necessary steps to ensure that the Alameda project not proceed until a full and proper environmental assessment process can be completed. And that is exactly what we are going to do.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, everyone in this country sees the environment as an absolute priority. So what does the new Minister of the Environment do? He hands out environmental assessment exemptions! My question to the minister is this: if he is

unable to meet the expectations of the public, is he at least prepared to resign and let someone else take his place?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the present government is working on Canada's environmental agenda as quickly as possible, an agenda that will be the envy of the industrialized world. I can assure all members of this House that they will be very proud to see how Canada compares internationally in the next few years.

[*English*]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Minister of the Environment based upon his statement today.

He said that he does not believe that the environmental review can proceed if construction is going on on the Alameda Dam. The Government of Saskatchewan indicated last evening that it intends to start construction of the Alameda project within a matter of a day or two.

Considering that fact, I want to ask the minister very specifically: Will he undertake a court injunction to ensure that there will be no construction on the Alameda project until that environmental assessment is properly conducted? Will he give the commitment that he will take that step today to stop that construction?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I indicated that we were looking at three options, all designed to do the same thing.

One is a court injunction and we are looking at that very closely. That has to be under the terms of the agreement, rather than under the terms of the licence. The other is a statutory action that we can do under some sections in the Fisheries Act. I am getting advice at the moment on that. The other one is, hopefully, to get an out of court agreement to not start work on Alameda.

I told the House yesterday, and I repeated it today twice, very clearly, that we will not accept the Alameda project proceeding until a full and proper assessment is done from an environmental point of view.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister understands that he does