

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Cauchon:** Mr. Speaker, I must say that this is an interesting question, one that was partially answered in my speech.

As I said, there is already a joint committee sitting at the level of all the environment ministers of all the provinces. They are all sitting in order to discuss what we are going to do about the environment in this country.

[Translation]

They are trying to set national standards so that we can have legislation or at least an environmental policy that will be consistent from coast to coast.

As I mentioned in my speech—

[English]

Unfortunately the Minister of the Environment of the province of Quebec declared weeks ago that it does not want to participate any more in that process. According to the minister it is a question of jurisdiction; the environment belongs to the provinces.

[Translation]

So, as I mentioned in my speech, that question has already been answered. The problem is that the Quebec Minister of the Environment refuses to participate in this process and, as I explained earlier, that is where there is a lack of objectivity. Every time we try to sit down with the government of Quebec or the Official Opposition to discuss national standards or other issues for the benefit of Quebecers and all Canadians, they refuse to take part in such discussions.

I think it is time we start telling Quebecers that the federal government is not as bad as some people would like them to believe and that the present federal government is actually very open.

This brings me to say a few words about the issue of social reform. You will understand that we cannot give these people any credibility when we have just undertaken a social reform process in which we want to consult Canadians so that they can participate in the development of a new government policy.

We are just through the first stage, which was the tabling of a discussion paper. The consultation process will follow—actually, it has already started. So we are still in the early stages of this reform and the ministers responsible in Quebec are already complaining that the federal government wants to interfere in areas under provincial jurisdiction, that the federal government is again picking on Quebec. I do not understand anything any more. If the government presents a discussion paper and wants to consult people, if this is interpreted as wanting to invade Quebec, I will have to take Politics 101 over again.

I do not understand anything any more, but it is obvious. Since the federal government wants to act openly and present a bill to reform part of our federal system, namely our social programs, they absolutely do not want to see this process succeed.

[English]

I must say that it is the same with the question of the environment. When we are discussing that subject, they do not want to enter into discussion with our government. They want to separate. They want to move apart so they will not be with us any more. As such it is going to be very difficult to deal with them over the next few years.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member puts a lot of stake in consultation. I applaud him for that because I believe that consulting is an important part of governing.

This bill contains just three provisions. One of those provisions is the opportunity for participation by Canadians through an intervener funding program or a participant funding program. That is a very important part of the consultation process inherent in environmental assessment.

• (1755)

The amendment in front of us provides a very vague approach to participant funding. Can the member give us any indication as to whether he would be supportive of a more specific intervener funding program to ensure that there are adequate resources available to those who wish to participate in the process and those who wish to be consulted during the process of environmental assessment?

**Mr. Cauchon:** Mr. Speaker, on the question of funding for people who want to proceed and be accepted in the consultation process, we should have a look at what we are doing. Actually the minister of human resources in his consultations on social reform decided that he will proceed with some funding for organizations across Canada.

I believe that on that specific point we have to respect the discretionary power of the minister. It depends on what process we are going ahead with. If it is a huge transformation in that field against it then the discretion of the minister will be used accordingly. I am very much in favour of the discretion that we kept in that bill.

**Ms. Margaret Bridgman (Surrey North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak on Bill C-56, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

I would first like to make a few comments on our environment in a general sense. First, environment has a special meaning in my constituency of Surrey North. Surrey is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. It has grown and expanded in recent years because of both immigration and migration. The immigration is mainly Asian and the migration is mainly people from the Vancouver area.