

Oral Questions

commitment to get the bill passed. This bill will provide significant reductions in acid rain crossing into Canada.

I might say that I had the privilege of extending my congratulations by telephone this morning to Senator Mitchell.

We are now hoping that the House of Representatives will introduce and pass this important legislation in order that it can become law this year and we can all breathe a little easier on both sides of the 49th parallel with cleaner air.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Yesterday after Question Period the Minister of the Environment said outside the House that Canada's energy ministers were being "too timid" about slashing carbon dioxide emissions. The environment minister went on to say: "We must be bolder".

Does the minister of energy agree with his colleague the Minister of the Environment? If so, will he today stop being timid and take bold steps to set targets to reduce air pollution in Canada?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, first, the hon. member talks about being too timid. If that accusation is valid for me, I imagine it is valid for some other people in this House, too.

I want to get directly to the question that the hon. member asked since it is a serious and important question.

After the Toronto conference energy ministers over the two-year period since 1988 looked clearly at what a 20 per cent reduction of CO₂ emissions, plus all growth, either industrial or through the use of private motor fuels, would mean in terms of the ability of Canadians to meet the target presented at the Toronto conference for the years between 1988 and 2005.

The first point that has to be made is that that would be a reduction of between 44 per cent and 50 per cent. That is the base line from which we would have to start.

The task force that we commissioned as ministers of energy released a report publicly which states in part: "It is believed that achievement of a 20 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2005 could cause significant economic dislocation and would likely require significant changes in lifestyle."

Some hon. members: Table it.

Mr. Epp: It has been made public. I can send hon. members a copy any time they want one.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps we could proceed to the second question and the minister could continue.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on March 10, 1989, over a year ago, the Prime Minister and 23 other heads of government signed the Declaration of The Hague which states:

Today, the very conditions of life on our planet are threatened by severe attacks to which the earth's atmosphere is subjected.

If the Minister of the Environment said yesterday that energy ministers, including his own colleague, were being "too timid" about slashing carbon dioxide emissions and that "we must be bolder", what is he going to do to protect his own credibility to get his colleague to act in this matter? Or, does he disagree both with him and with his Prime Minister?

• (1420)

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I never said the word "timid"; never, never in my life.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): We all know that not one of my colleagues is timid. They are all bold and courageous.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): At least they are not timid with me.

What I said is that I hope Canada will be at the forefront of the fight against pollution and CO₂ emissions.