

*Private Members' Business*

government announced its commitment to federal environment stewardship.

The federal government's goal is to ensure that all of its operations and procedures meet or exceed national targets and schedules for sustaining our environment.

The green plan provides for a comprehensive review of the environmental implications of existing statutes, policies, programs and regulations. Modifications will be proposed as necessary. While much of the initial work will take place over the period of 1991 to 1996, the review itself will be an ongoing process.

The government believes that the federal operations should be exemplary in meeting and frequently exceeding all national regulations and standards as well as being compatible with provincial and international environmental objectives. As the single largest business in Canada, it is the special responsibility of the federal government to lead by example.

As part of the green plan, the government will adopt a comprehensive code of environmental stewardship covering all areas of federal operations and activities. Federal departments and agencies will develop environmental action plans indicating how they will implement the code, and they will report regularly on implementation.

The code will be complemented by a list of targets or objectives. They will cover a broad range of areas from waste management to hazardous waste cleanup.

Projects involving the federal government will be subjected to the provisions of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Review bill. This bill will ensure that all federal departments and agencies conduct environmental assessments of all project proposals for which they have decision making authority and gives the Minister of the Environment substantial powers to ensure that this process is fair, efficient, transparent and allows for a high level of public input into decisions of projects which have a potentially significant impact on the natural environment.

Together, this bill and the policies of the Government of Canada will ensure that virtually every significant action considered by the government will be reviewed for its environmental implications. Canadians will have the right to either participate directly in the process or to have access to the results.

As essential as this process is, however, the government recognizes it is not enough. The federal environmental review process and its reforms will provide an effective mechanism for ensuring that environmental factors are taken into account in future decisions.

It is government policy that new policies and programs coming before cabinet for decision be subject to an environmental review. Each minister is responsible for conducting an environmental assessment of the policy and program initiative prior to any final decision being taken by the government.

Furthermore, a public statement on the expected environmental implications of the initiative is to accompany the official announcement of each initiative where the environmental impact is significant.

It is this process, for example, that will be applied to any free trade agreement with Mexico and the United States. Work is under way within the government and with the help of outside experts to develop the methods and procedures for effectively predicting and assessing the environmental effects of a policy or program initiative. I would note for the members that Canada will be among the first in the world to have such a process. Beyond these important internal measures, the government is committed to improving the ability of individuals to participate in government environmental decision-making. Such participation is essential to the environmentally sensitive decision-making. We can no longer rely solely on experts for the solutions to environmental problems. Instead we need input from a wider cross-section of the population.

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Throughout the green plan consultation process, it was clear that Canadians wanted to be involved in major decisions that affected their lives and the lives of their children. Canada's green plan provides for ongoing consultations with Canadians as part of its regular review and updating of goals, targets, and programs. In fact, we want to build on the lessons learned during the green plan consultations to make our consultation process even more effective and to ensure even greater involvement of Canadians in the formulation and implementation of national environmental policy.

As well, we know that to be effective, Canadians need readily understandable information on the state of the environment and how it is changing in response to what we are doing. This kind of information provides them