

It is this irrational and self-destructive use of economic growth as the overriding criterion of national well-being that is the number one obstacle which prevents us from being able to successfully address our environmental problems today. But there are other obstacles.

One is a societal mindset that remains trapped in sectoral and disciplinary boundaries. For example, myopic economists still leave environmental concerns to ecologists, and energy producers develop new energy sources for others to clean up.

Another obstacle which prevents us from being able to develop a coherent and effective strategic plan to protect our environment is the institutional rigidity of our political system. Decisions are made too often for short-term political gain rather than for long-term environmental benefit.

Finally, we are trying to clean up and protect the environment with *ad hoc*, linear methods that are ineffective given the cumulative, synergistic nature of the problem. We deal with the effects rather than causes, with symptomatic treatment rather than definitive cures or prevention.

• (1720)

Because environmental impact assessment procedures are a preventive tool, they are an essential element in an effective environmental strategy. This is why I support this motion.

Canada is a democratic federation operating in a mixed economy. Hence, management and control of resources, their uses and their by-products, is dispersed between the different levels of government and the private sector. One of the federal government's responsibilities in this area is to establish national standards for adoption and enforcement by the provincial governments.

Environmental impact assessment has existed at the federal level since the 1970s. The environment assessment and review process has been revised since, but it is still not adequate.

Instead of specific legislation, we have an administrative policy which the government, any government, can change at will. There are no safeguards or opportunities for real public scrutiny. Its legal status remains uncertain and less clear than if it were in the form of a statute

Private Members' Business

passed by this Parliament. Decisions can be ignored and there exists no recourse mechanism to prevent this. Jurisdictional disorder and dispute between the federal and provincial levels of government continue to persist.

In light of these problems with the environmental assessment and review process and given the importance of the environment, the government must introduce legislation to fully protect our environment and this includes instituting mandatory environmental impact assessment procedures. Compulsory environmental impact assessments will insure that all levels of government will be informed of all factors which affect a project or a product and will clarify the current jurisdictional dispute among different levels of government and will minimize duplication and save time and effort.

Future legislation on environmental impact assessments must cast a wide net and capture all undertakings that have any federal aspect or element. Exemptions for projects that have a very minor federal component or where provisions exist to avoid duplication of assessment can then be built into this statute.

Also, studies should be conducted which examine the effect on the biophysical environment, not only of projects or products, but also of policies and programs. Also, assessments must review cultural, social and economic impacts of the projects and policies as well.

I would like to give one example of recent events which occurred as a result of nebulous nature of the current environmental review process. The federal government issued a licence for the Rafferty-Alameda Dam project in Saskatchewan without following its own procedure for assessing the plan which includes two major dams and reservoirs on the Souris River. To speed construction, federal authorities relied on the assessments of the Saskatchewan government.

The Canadian Wildlife Federation challenged the federal government's decision to issue a licence without a proper assessment of the potential impact on wildlife and water in the Souris River. The Federal Court of Canada quashed the licence and ordered a federal environment impact review.

The government then took another shortcut and held quick public hearings instead of a full scale review. The preliminary evaluation indicated potential worsening of