

Private Members' Business

conscious, competitive markets, that is the firm that is going to get its customers back.

I have heard claims that we cannot afford action to avert climate changes, that it comes at too high a cost and will price us out of the global marketplace. The very reverse is true. We cannot afford not to act.

Our major trading partners have plans for stabilizing their greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2000. They include Britain, the United States and Germany. Denmark is a northern country with cold temperatures like Canada. Despite that, it has a plan to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in emissions by the year 2005. There may be some doubt about whether all these countries will actually achieve stabilization of emissions at 1990 levels as they are setting out to do but at least they have made the commitment and have started along the path toward that goal.

They are taking steps that all can see and measure. Canada must do the same and members can begin by giving their support to this motion now before the House. It is only sensible to adopt a precautionary approach in addressing the issues of climate change. We must take steps now, not wait until later when more painful or more costly solutions may and will be required.

Granted, climate change poses a great threat to Canada but the effort to counter climate change is an undertaking that summons all the best qualities of Canadians, imagination, drive, a willingness to innovate, an entrepreneurial spirit and a taste for hard work. These are the qualities that built our country and have repeatedly won for it the number one ranking by the United Nations human development index.

Those qualities will help us face the challenge of climate change and in doing so we will ensure a bright, sustainable future for Canada. It is a fine line between a healthy environment, a sustainable environment—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order. I regret, the member's time has elapsed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion tabled by the hon. member for Davenport. We both sit on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Through our numerous meetings, I have come to know the hon. member, who is a former environment minister and also a man dedicated to promoting a sound environment.

However, I am surprised that, given his professionalism, he would table a motion which, albeit positive, is excessively vague and non directive.

• (1900)

Motion M-168 reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should, in anticipation of global climate change, consider the advisability of promoting energy conservation and efficiency, as well as placing greater reliance on renewable sources of energy so as to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and nuclear power.

With all due respect, I submit that this motion does not have any substance.

“The government should— consider the advisability of promoting—” I have often seen laws and regulations designed to monitor stakeholders more closely. I am referring to the opposite of what is called a toothless piece of legislation. The motion says: “The government should”. Does this mean “should” or “should really”?

At the rate Liberals are examining, consulting and discussing, they will consider the issue for a long time. Let me give you an example. The health sector: Four years and \$12 million later the government suddenly realizes that this field falls under provincial jurisdiction. It was a mistake. Not to worry. We just start all over again.

Why this vague wording? Maybe the hon. member knows that the government is not able or does not have the will to implement its laws. Canada's environmental act is one of the most comprehensive and complex. We are in the process of reviewing it.

The Canadian Environmental Protection Act gives the Canadian government several powers to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels. However, the act regarding political party financing allows oil companies to make substantial contributions to the party in power. There may not be a link, at least, this is not what I meant.

As I was saying, under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the government could have promoted the reduction of energy consumption. It is easy to say, less easy to prove. I will anyway.

The preamble of the act states “Whereas the government of Canada in demonstrating national leadership should establish national environmental quality objectives, guidelines and codes of practice—”

I am not saying I agree with this, but it is in the preamble.

Further in the preamble, it says: “And whereas Canada must be able to fulfil its international obligations in respect of the environment—”. I will speak later about the failure to meet the commitments made by Canada in Rio to reduce at the source the emission of greenhouse gases. A lack of will, probably.

In section 2 of the same act, we are told that we can take both preventative and remedial measures in protecting the environment. Preventative and remedial. However in a 1994 catalogue