

Government Orders

This is a vibrant example of federal, provincial and municipal co-operation. Let us remember the agreements under the infrastructure program which helped renew our social infrastructure and put a number of people back to work. Recently, last June in fact, there was an agreement between the provinces to do away with economic barriers. Is it not proof that federalism works?

Clearly, this legislation is in the same vein and shows the same kind of vision. This is why members of the Official Opposition have every reason to make the people of Quebec believe that this legislation is useless and even harmful to the whole of Quebec.

In 1981, 13 years ago, the government of the Parti Québécois passed the Environment Quality Act. At the same time, it adopted regulations listing the kind of projects which would be subject to hearings by the Quebec Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement.

Unfortunately, the Quebec government forgot to proclaim certain key sections of the regulations and today, 13 years later, the Parti Québécois government's process only deals with dams, roads and marinas. There is no public assessment of industrial projects, no public assessment of mining projects and no public assessment of aluminum plants.

• (1745)

I would like to conclude, if I may, Mr. Speaker, on a very important point, namely the harmonization of the federal and provincial processes. For the past several months, the members of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment have been looking for ways to facilitate harmonization. Their objective is to agree on the implementation of the principle of one environmental assessment for each project, regardless of the number of decision-makers. It is an arduous task requiring the participation of all provinces.

Nevertheless, the Quebec environment minister recently announced that he was withdrawing his officials from the federal-provincial consultations on environmental assessment. This decision could hurt Quebec businesses as well as Quebecers looking for a job. The president of the Conseil du patronat du Québec recently condemned this hasty decision on the part of the Quebec environment minister. Other organizations are to follow suit.

To conclude, if the Bloc members want to show that they are more concerned about the interests of Quebecers that they are about their obsession to separate, they should do two things in this House. First, they should support the proclamation of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and the amendments proposed by the environment minister.

Second, if these people were acting reasonably and for the sake of all Quebecers, they would recognize the appropriateness of this bill for the future of Quebec, the future of Canada and the well-being of federalism. They would also have the courage to demand that the Quebec environment minister change his mind and take part again in the work of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment on the harmonization of the environmental assessment process. This is what they would do if only they had enough courage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before we proceed with questions and comments, the government whip has the floor on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 43(2), I wish to inform you that the next speakers from the government will be sharing their time.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to put a question to the member for Outremont who I think spoke quite well on the bill and other matters. It is partly the other matters that I want to address in my opening comments before I place my question.

The debate through most of today centred around issues within the province of Quebec. With the exception of comments earlier in the day the government speakers have all represented Quebec ridings this afternoon so far, including the parliamentary secretary, the member for Davenport—I apologize, Mr. Speaker, I just realize the member for Davenport is from Ontario. I have to rephrase my question.

The comments today have centred around the jurisdiction of the province of Quebec. The member for Outremont rightly speaks for his constituents and the people of his province. I believe the question of jurisdiction while it is an important one is not the only question that we have to deal with in this House.

I had expected members of the Bloc Québécois at least in one of their speeches today as members representing the Official Opposition to raise some of the issues which are important to the rest of Canada, issues that are over and above the questions of jurisdiction.

The member for Outremont must be aware that the province of Quebec would have to participate in joint panels if this bill came into force with the amendments put forward today.

• (1750)

How would the member for Outremont advise the members of his government to deal with the province of Quebec in matters where confrontation might exist over the issues of not only jurisdiction but of the joint panels that must be created under the auspices of the act?