

*Private Members' Business*

When I think back to my days as a young student it was never a top of the mind subject. We truly have come a long way in terms of appreciating and understanding the importance of our environment and the role it plays in the lives of our young people. I am so glad to see the changing attitudes of Canadians toward our environment, toward the importance of sustainability.

In my riding I have the great fortune to live on a farm. My family has been there for five generations. One of the things we enjoy doing every Sunday if possible is walking through the fields along the railway tracks, through the wooded areas and looking at the wildlife. We see red foxes, racoons, deer. We look at the flora and every spring we wait to see the blooming trilliums and the may-apples. It has become a tradition in our family that we pass along from generation to generation. It is one of my favourite things to do with my two sons on a Sunday afternoon.

At the schools the children always ask me what the government is doing about the environment. I am always very pleased to explain to them that our Deputy Prime Minister also has the responsibility for the environment and that she is taking very assertive and definite approaches to making sure the things that have become very much a part of our country remain in our country.

I was shocked to find out as I was preparing for this discussion that there are 244 endangered species in Canada alone, 244 endangered, threatened or vulnerable species. Knowing that, we can understand why the hon. member for Davenport feels so strongly about the importance of this legislation.

I am not sure this is true but as I look at information I see nine extinct species, things in my lifetime I will never see. A further 11 species used to exist in Canada but are now extinct. The importance of preparing to maintain and protect our fragile environment is something that has to be critical to all of us.

I am very proud of a project undertaken by a number of groups in my riding, the Brant Waterways Foundation, the Grand River Conservation Authority and the Grand River Trails Association. They came together in partnership with the federal government through the environmental partners program to develop the Brantford environmental education project. Along the Grand River, now a heritage river, we have created walkways, bike paths and trails that all can enjoy.

The thing that is so important in this regard is along the shores of the Grand River are Carolinian forests, themselves an endangered and rare set of flora and fauna. We are very lucky in our community to have them as part of our surrounding environment, something we can enjoy with ease. We are also lucky to have organizations in Brant that are conscious of how fragile this great resource is.

Coming together and with the support of the federal government we have protected that in a way that people can enjoy it. It is not for the people of Brant only. I encourage members of the House and Canadians from across the country to come and join with us.

At our local level we have a consciousness, an awareness of the importance of the environment. I am glad that will continue. However, when we look at the rest of the country it is interesting to note that only in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick is there legislation to protect our flora and fauna. Again, this is another reason why I would congratulate the member for Davenport for bringing this legislation forward.

• (1825)

The federal government can play a real role in ensuring that our natural heritage remains with us. It will not be a role that is interventionist or that gets in the way of what the provinces want to do. Rather it is one that will co-ordinate activities, that will add to that which we already have, that will make sure the Canadian citizenry understands the importance and has access to our environment.

We know from looking at things that have taken place in the past, and I have to reference the Canada Health Act, that very often it is promises that start with good pieces of legislation. However, it may be very slow to evolve across the country. That is where a strong federal government can play a role.

I make that relationship with this particular piece of legislation and say there is a role for us to play at the federal level to ensure that Canada from coast to coast to coast maintains what has become world renowned in natural beauty, natural strength, natural resources and natural heritage.

I am pleased to be part of the debate. I know people back in my riding who are so sensitive and appreciative of the issues of the environment will also be glad to know that the government is sponsoring this kind of legislation.

**Mr. Larry McCormick (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to speak to Bill C-275.

I congratulate the hon. member for Davenport on this bill and also the Minister of the Environment and her parliamentary secretary for the work they are doing on this very important topic. It is very important to take the initiatives of these people and work with them. We owe our children and our children's children our prompt attention to this very important endangered species Act.

This past year I attended two open houses at the Body Shop, one in Kingston, Ontario and one in Belleville, Ontario. This respectable company had a great display set up with everything from colouring contests to T-shirts and it encourages children to take part. It has done a great job of making people aware of endangered species around the world.