

*Government Orders*

The pre-study committee, though, has met. It has established memberships. It has elected a chairperson. It has hired a clerk, a researcher, and a lawyer. It has established a schedule for hearings, identified witnesses, and contacted those witnesses to establish a specific schedule for hearings.

That pre-study committee is being pushed aside by the House discussing Bill C-78 in this second reading debate. That is one of the main reasons why I regret having to stand in my place here today to discuss this bill, before we have had the opportunity to hear the testimony of the expert witnesses, and the interested and concerned groups and individuals out there. It is one of the reasons I believe that the government is acting in haste to get this legislation passed. That pre-study committee obviously was important to the government, to the opposition, and to the people of the country just a few months ago. Why is that pre-study committee not now so important?

The government has brought in Bill C-78 for second reading, ignoring that reference to the pre-study committee and it appears to be rushing to get this legislation through as quickly as possible. With its bent toward closure, Mr. Speaker, I would bet that we are going to see closure on Bill C-78, too, in the very near future.

The House and Canada want this bill to be as good as possible. There is no reason to rush this through. There is every reason in the world to hear all the evidence and testimony that is being prepared to come before the pre-study committee.

Since the government had set up a process that would ensure adequate and proper study, we should be following that process and not trying to pre-empt it. We have to do this correctly because, as I said before, we will not have the time to do it again.

Earlier today in Question Period, my colleague from Skeena, the NDP's environmental critic, raised the question with the Minister of the Environment. He pointed out that the new environmental assessment package that the government claims is the best in the world needs major changes because a top level ecological forum said so on Tuesday.

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy was set up more than a year ago by the Prime Minister. It includes the environment minister and the finance minister, as well as business leaders and

environmentalists. That Round Table on Tuesday recommended that the environmental reforms introduced by the government in June had to be tightened, that an environmental auditor be named, and that cabinet documents on the ecological implications of government decisions be made available to the public.

The chairman of that Round Table, Mr. David Johnston, principal of McGill University in Montreal, said that the changes are needed because the government departments that put forward the proposals to cabinet will also carry out the environmental assessments. "There is a need for public confidence in the process," Mr. Johnston said.

Obviously, these are the types of things that we need to be doing and working on in the pre-study committee before this bill comes to the House for second reading, discussion, and full debate in the Chamber.

The key to all this is that this debate has to be built around the best possible bill and that we do it in a process that has been established ahead of time.

You will note, Mr. Speaker, that I had indicated that the national forum had called for an environmental auditor to be named. I know that you are a well read individual. You will be aware that the New Democratic Party's task force on the environment, in its document released earlier this year, also called for an independent auditor.

It is worth noting that an independent auditor was mentioned in the original draft of Bill C-78. Somehow, in the final version that we now have before us, the presence of an independent auditor is not in place. I wonder why. We should be discussing that in the pre-study committee.

There are lots of things that are wrong with Bill C-78, and I should just mention a few of them here before my time expires.

The bill is actually less effective than the EARP guidelines which are currently in place. The bill undoes progress made through court decisions such as the Muldoon decision on the Rafferty-Alameda Dam. That is something that concerns me personally. The measures in this bill are left up to the discretion of the environment minister, making it difficult for the courts to order compliance.