

Government Orders

re-examine our definition of sustainable development at that point in time.

In the meantime, the combination of the stated purposes on which the minister has accepted a commitment to act, the definition of sustainable development as provided in the legislation, and the inclusion under clause 58 of an indication by which the department will define justifiable circumstances has provided a good foundation on which to act. We feel that although we do not address the precise wording of the hon. member, we have gone a significant step in that direction. I think that under the circumstances we have reached what we consider to be a logical and appropriate point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Before I recognize the next speaker for South West Nova, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Prince Albert—Churchill River—Health; the hon. member for Don Valley East—The Economy; the hon. member for Calgary Northeast—Ukraine; the hon. member for St. Boniface—Post-Secondary Education; the hon. member for Dartmouth—Interest Rates.

The hon. member for South West Nova.

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, having taken part in the earlier debate on this bill and having sat in committee while we went through clause by clause, and at other times replacing some of my colleagues in the clause by clause, I have to say that I do have concerns specifically related to this subclause. I do like the use of sustainable development as my colleague has proposed in the amendment.

I would like to give you an example of what I find weak in using “can be justified in the circumstances”. If you look at “environmental effects” in the definition clause, it reads:

“environmental effect” means, in respect of a project,

(a) any change that the project may cause in the environment, including any effect of any such change on health and socio-economic conditions, on physical and cultural heritage, on the current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes by aboriginal persons, or on any structure, site or thing that is of historical, archaeological or paleontological or architectural significance, and

(b) any change to the project that may be caused by the environment, whether any such change occurs within or outside of Canada;

There are words in which I have had a little experience, having been chairman of the environment committee when FEARO was discussed—and that is the former regulation, which this bill has improved on perhaps in terms of process—that come out in this clause:

(a) where, taking into account the implementation of any mitigation measures that the responsible authority considers appropriate,

(ii) the project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects

I just read to you the definition of environment effects. It can be “of any such change on health and socio-economic conditions”. With those words alone—“the project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects that can be justified in the circumstances”—the minister can go ahead and allow approval. I say that because if you allow the sustainable development clause in there along with the purposes and the definition of environmental effects, I think you are providing Canadians a much safer way of finding out whether or not a federally funded project is going to affect the people in that area.

I will go back to two projects that I have seen in my own area. One was an ACOA grant of about a million dollars, and if FEARO had not been there, there would have been no study to justify that it was not going to cause—even if I disagreed with the result of the study and I could see that it did affect the people who lived around the site, the federal government had a responsibility to do some type of study. When that discretion is allowed, “justified in the circumstances”, with no definition has to what circumstances, a very broad relationship is made so any government or any responsible authority can trod over the rights of people, I think, without having to do any study as to the cause and effect of a government project.

In this day and age, I think the local people have to be aware that governments do fund projects and do affect their environment without taking any consideration of it. By leaving it so broad that it can be “justified in the circumstances”, it may be justifiable in Ottawa to give a grant or to fund something down on Digby Neck, and therefore in the circumstances it may be only a couple of million dollar project in Ottawa, but it may have very harmful socio-economic and health effects in a given area. Unless the people are aware that such funding is going to be given and if there is nothing in the process to make it mandatory—and this bill says that it is within the