

accountability to Parliament and to the public on environmental matters simply cannot be carried out or ensured without environmental audit.

In times of tight budgets and rising public debt, environmental audit presents opportunities for substantial savings on government operating costs. As a new field of knowledge, environmental audit methodology has the potential to be a major international market opportunity for Canadian expertise and knowledge. As well, this initiative by government will ensure that businesses seeking to be more environmentally responsible and more competitive and productive in a global economy will have the tools they need to reach these objectives.

This year for the first time the Auditor General chose to address the question of environmental audit in the first chapter of his 1990 annual report to Parliament. The chapter is entitled: "Matters of Special Importance and Interest". In that chapter, on page 23, the Auditor General talks about "the protection of the natural environment, a prime example of the need for accountability". He talks about the responsibilities for protection of our natural environment as being major and shared, and that accountability for them should be exacted.

Section 1.46 states:

One can look at the environment as a fund: a fund of paramount importance to all. It is shrinking while the number of people who must share it is growing. The share of each person, especially those coming after us, is being reduced—for practical purposes it is governments that have been given the operating responsibility (for the environment)—

The federal government deals with national concerns for the environment—Parliament should expect governments to devise acceptable means of being held accountable for the conduct of its environmental responsibilities—

Here then is a case where government's accountability for—the total government effort on the environment—is more important than focusing on the individual performance of departments—

On the question of the environment, the Auditor General finishes up by asking, in terms of responsibility for Canada's environmental well-being: "Who is minding the store?" That is the purpose of this motion today.

I want to make a few other references and indicate to the House why I say that this is an idea whose time has come.

*Private Members' Business*

It was in late 1970, that the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States first asked for disclosure to investors of present and future costs of complying with environmental regulations. That was when companies had to begin doing environmental audits.

In 1986, New Zealand introduced the position of parliamentary commissioner for the environment, one of whose main functions is the audit and surveillance of government operations for their impact on the environment and holding government accountable for those operations.

In 1988, the enforcement and compliance policy accompanying the Canadian Environmental Protection Act recognized the effectiveness of environmental audit as a management tool for companies and government agencies.

In the spring, the discussion paper on the Green Plan stated with regard to about environmental audit that the objective "to make Canada by the year 2000, the industrial world's most environmentally friendly country" can be achieved if we lead by example. "As the largest single business in Canada, the government has important responsibilities related to the environmental impact of its own decisions. Good environmental management will increasingly make good business sense." It went on to state that "a number of businesses have already developed environmental audit procedures and put the question, should businesses and governments be required to perform environmental audits?"

The answer from the consultations on the green plan discussion paper was a resounding yes. The August report recommends that all government departments be required to undertake annual environmental audits and make the results public, which is exactly what this motion is proposing.

Those businesses, environmental organizations, and ordinary citizens with whom the government consulted again suggested that "all government departments should be required to conduct annual environmental audits and that the government should develop a code of environmental stewardship to govern the operations of all federal departments". The trend continues from there.