

Government Orders

environment, are making as a recommendation to the Canadian Parliament.

I did that very deliberately because I took sincerely the suggestion of the hon. member for Terrebonne suggestion that there be a great move to invite public input and to get the public engaged at every step of the way in order to ensure that Canada would be not only environmentally correct, not only environmentally safe, but it would be a beacon, a lighthouse if you will, a beacon of inspiration for all those countries that are looking for legislation that is going to correct the evils that are being perpetrated on the environment.

As for how much money will have to be there, I would have loved to have seen the member give me a response as to what the recommendation of his own Minister of Finance was around the cabinet table when the cuts went from \$5 billion over five years to whatever obfuscated figure is now on the table.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Terrebonne has 45 seconds.

Mr. Jean-Marc Robitaille (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief.

I listened very carefully to the hon. member's speech. He referred, and correct me if I am wrong, to the bill's effectiveness as far as projects were concerned in which Canada, through CIDA, provides assistance to foreign countries. I simply want to ask the hon. member on what grounds he says that Bill C-78, the bill before the House today, has no legislative provisions to deal with this. If you look at Section 44 of the Bill, you will see, and in any case it seems to me there are a number of provisions to deal with this. So I would like to know what grounds the hon. member has for saying that projects financed by CIDA outside the country are not subject to environmental assessment.

[*English*]

Mr. Volpe: Certainly, I will be very, very brief. One goes on the basis of what is in the legislation, what the minister says is the intent of the legislation and how he goes about explaining what is applicable and what is not. Take a look at the ministerial statements and the press kit.

Mr. Larry Schneider (Regina—Wascana): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in this important debate today.

The objectives presented by Bill C-78 are of great importance to all Canadians. I wish to concentrate my remarks today on a particularly important segment of the Canadian population, namely, Canada's aboriginal people and the way in which the bill has been designed to relate to their specific needs and interests.

There have been from time to time criticisms of federal governments, including past administrations, for not giving adequate recognition to the needs, rights and interests of Canada's first nations peoples. These criticisms have been justified in large measure and it gives me great pleasure to be able to indicate to the House today the substantive advances toward that recognition made in Bill C-78.

First, I want to point out to the House the basic scope of the process established by Bill C-78. Whenever an environmental assessment is conducted in accordance with this bill, it must consider not only the effects on the biological and physical environment as represented by the water, air, land and wildlife, but also the effects of any changes to the environment on the health and socio-economic conditions of Canadians. This means that full consideration must be given, where relevant, to the effects on aboriginal people of any development initiatives for which the federal government has a decision authority.

This is a particularly relevant clause because of the great reliance of Canada's aboriginal people on Canada's natural resources. It is sad to note the extent to which these have already been depleted and degraded and the extent to which, as a consequence, the life styles of Canada's first nations people have been changed, in some case drastically and in others tragically.

We are determined to begin to turn this around and we have introduced a number of specific provisions in the bill which will have that effect. I intend to identify and explain for members the key references in the bill to the interests of aboriginal people, beginning with the definition of federal land.

The bill applies to all projects taking place on federal land. Specifically included in that definition are reserves and other lands set apart for the use of bands under the Indian Act. This means that all projects taking place on reserves are subject to the act. To the extent the Minister of Indian Affairs has decision authority over those projects, the minister must ensure that the act is re-