

*Government Orders*

Bill C-78 will take a major step forward in ensuring that we listen carefully to the environment from now on and that we learn from the feedback that it is able to provide us. Monitoring programs will allow us to evaluate the accuracy of our environmental impact predictions and to judge the effectiveness of our impact mitigation measures. In this way we will learn quickly from our successes as well as our mistakes, and we will be able to improve and update the environmental assessment process as we gain experience with it.

Probably the most intriguing and innovative sections in Bill C-78 with respect to native interests are those relating to transborder environmental effects. These provisions will allow the federal government to provide much earlier and more effective protection to native land interests during a variety of claim and self-government negotiations.

For instance, once the boundaries of a native land interest have been identified and agreed to by the parties to a land claim or self-government negotiation, the Minister of the Environment will have the authority to establish a public review panel to look into any developments that could cause serious environmental damage to those lands, whether those developments will be located on or off the defined lands. In addition, the minister will have the power to issue an order, and back it up with a court injunction, prohibiting the development from proceeding until the minister and the native people are satisfied that any serious environmental effects can be mitigated. If that concern cannot be satisfied, then the project can be held up indefinitely or at least until the native people take over control of the land under their claim or self-government agreement.

Bill C-78 represents an important step forward in the federal government's environmental assessment process. It is also an important step forward in the government's willingness to learn from the First Nations of Canada about the principles of sustainable development and to work with the First Nations of Canada to protect their common environmental heritage.

As a native Canadian and as a member of the government, and, as I said, because of the importance of the environment to Wetaskiwin, I am prepared to offer my

strong support for Bill C-78 for the very reason that it is an effective planning and consensus-building process based firmly on a principle of self-assessment.

**Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, today we have an opportunity to reflect on a great Canadian dream, to have an environmental assessment act so that we can secure for ourselves and for our children in the future a secure life and a secure standard of living.

Debate on this bill brings us to the concepts of economic development and environmental conservation. The two must be linked and that bridge is what we call sustainable development.

Currently there are laws and regulations to protect the environment, to avoid the threats to air, land and water, and the threats to plants, animals and our citizens.

What are some of the consequences to human health, for example, of global climatic change, a real environmental concern today? We can expect due to increased climatic heat an increased number of deaths among our elderly citizens, among the chronically ill and debilitated persons, and among our young infants. We can expect increased death and incapacitation from lung diseases such as asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema and bronchiectasis. They are chronic diseases which could make it difficult for patients to breathe.

• (1600)

There are also consequences of global climatic change that emanate from the thinning of the ozone layer, not only from the heat itself. Due to this thinning in the ozone layer, we can expect an increased incidence of skin cancer among the Caucasian population of the world, an increased incidence of cataracts, a reduction in the immune response of the body, and thus the individuals are subject to infections and to increased gravity of infection.

The global climatic change also poses adverse effects on food supplies and agriculture in general. These consequences definitely ask for solutions. One approach is to ensure that binding, effective environmental assessment processes are in place. Thus, there is an opportunity for all of us, government, citizens, businesses, everyone, to face a challenge, to do a job in partnership.