

Government Orders

Of course, Mr. Speaker, there will be cases where mediation will not be suitable. Those projects will undergo a complete review by a panel. Furthermore, if a mediation attempt fails, the Minister of the Environment can still appoint a review panel.

Mr. Speaker, the evaluation reports relating to all major projects will have to include a follow-up program that will be made available to the public. We are not hiding anything. We are making it available to the public. This will enable us to check the accuracy of the environmental assessment basis as well as the efficiency of the actions taken to mitigate the environmental effects of the project.

The aspect I like best, Mr. Speaker, is the increased opportunity for public participation. The public being an integral part of the process, the bill is transparent and accessible to the public. That way, we avoid the risk of things being said and turning out to be different. So, the follow-up process open to the public guarantees the efficiency of Bill C-78.

Mr. Speaker, we also intend to bring to light all actions that have been taken and to ask for the full participation of the public at all stages of the environmental assessment process. Not only in the beginning, in the middle or at the end, but all through the process. Most of all we wish to ensure the concerns of the public will be taken into consideration as part of the assessment process.

Mr. Speaker, there will be public consultation at all stages and in all cases. The public will be kept informed and we will ask for its comments. For that purpose, public registries will be kept. They will be used as information sources regarding all projects. The public will have access to them, and will be informed of all projects.

The ultimate and laudable goal of this bill is to ensure better protection for the environment by giving the Minister of the Environment greater responsibility in that process and facilitating the participation of the public at all stages while maintaining the principle of self-evaluation and keeping various federal departments and bodies responsible for the environmental consequences of decisions they will take on projects.

All those elements considered, the proposed reform deserves our support. The new environmental assess-

ment process proposed here is fair and equitable, and above all, it takes into account the environmental reality of Canada of the twenty-first century.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, the process will be balanced. Each project will get the exact qualitative or quantitative attention it deserves.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, and I will conclude by saying that the process will help us to step from a costly and inefficient environmental approach by which we can only find a cure to a much more profitable preventive and predictable approach.

Mr. Speaker, time has come to cease making decisions on big development projects without taking into account their implications for our economy and environment. Mr. Speaker, reacting to and making up for damages that we were not able to predict as was done in the past is all over. We are debating today Bill C-78 that will allow us to integrate from the outset an environmental concern in the planning of big projects and to see to it that we do not have to fix 15 or 20 years down the road what will have been destroyed for lack of planning or judgment.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to support the second reading of Bill C-78, because it is an efficient and open bill, a bill that includes a visible process, that gives the public an opportunity to actively participate in this whole process. Mr. Speaker, I think all members of this House will be very happy with this bill, which is a government's initiative, and will very happy to support it with great enthusiasm, because I know that all members are very concerned with the environment and that they want us, with a bill as excellent as Bill C-78, to be able, right now, to protect our environment and our resources in the interests of future generations, of the future of our children.

So, once again, Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of this House to support wholeheartedly Bill C-78, for the sake of the environment.

• (1700)

[English]

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the deputy chair of the special committee on Bill C-78. I know him to be a very interested member in the proceedings of the Canadian environmental assessment legislation.