

Government Orders

Environment to discuss the environmental effects of their policies, programs, projects or legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to go on to talk about some of the improvements which will make the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act much more efficient than the existing Order in Council.

First of all, the proposed Bill will ensure that an environmental assessment is carried out before the project goes ahead. This, Mr. Speaker, will ensure that environmental problems are identified and alleviating measures are in place before the actual work starts. That way, we will be able to maintain both a healthy economy and a healthy environment. As importantly, Mr. Speaker, we will avoid the actual process which, so often, turns out to be inefficient from both an administrative and environmental point of view.

Second, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act will give the Minister of the Environment greater powers and increased control on the environmental assessment process. Nobody but the Minister of the Environment—not even the responsible authority of the project—will have the power to decide whether mediation or a panel review is necessary.

The bill will also give the Environment Minister the power to set up public review panels to assess the projects which could have serious transborder environmental effects on federal, provincial, Indian or foreign lands.

For instance, a project in one province likely to have environmental effects on another province or a federal or Indian territory, or even outside the country, would belong to this category.

Third, in order to ensure an effective environmental assessment process, this government will agree to provide major new funding for the purpose of fully implementing the process throughout. The addition of this new funding could even triple the current level allocated for environmental assessments.

In order to make it possible for the process to be effective, the Act will set up the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency which will have an arm's length approach with all departments, including Environment Canada. Its mandate will be to assess and report on the implementation of the environmental assessment process throughout its organization. Every year, the minister

will have to table in the House a report which Canadians will be able to examine.

Fifth, the new legislation will require the setting up of follow-up programs in order to ensure the effectiveness of the new assessment process. The Act will ensure that the setting-up of follow-up and monitoring plans will be part of the environmental assessment of all major projects.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret to interrupt the hon. minister, but his allotted time has expired. Is there unanimous consent to allow him to continue?

Mrs. Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of information. Did the minister not use his 40 minutes in the first half of this debate?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): No, he did not.

Mrs. Campbell (South West Nova): I would like to know why he insults us by a 10-minute speech and asks for unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Perhaps the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands can straighten it out for the hon. member.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, there were indications that the minister could not make it this morning to be here for the 20-minute speech which he might have legitimately given.

Mrs. Campbell (South West Nova): Forty minutes.

Mr. Milliken: No. This morning he would have had 20 minutes in the usual course, with 10 minutes for questions and comments. That time expired, and now we are into the 10-minute segment.

We recognized that the minister could not be here. There were discussions among the parties. We would be happy to extend his 10 minutes by an additional 10 so that he has a full 20-minute speech without questions or comments.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point. We are certainly glad. We understand the difficulties the minister had in being here earlier. We are certainly prepared to let him have the full 20 minutes but, like other members, we certainly hope there is unanimous consent to allow for a 10-minute question and answer period, which I am sure the minister would seek.