

*Government Orders*

We have been critical of the government's approach in the regulation making process, which is that there will be exemptions and there will be inclusions. As the hon. member for Davenport said the other day, you are either in or you are out or you are out or you are in. Those sorts of matters, as far as the regulations are concerned, have been of great concern to us. However it has been on the major bigger projects that we have expressed concern.

As for the matter of granting funds strictly for the purpose of conducting an environmental assessment, the federal government has many other ways in which it can participate in an environmental assessment process if there is a fear that the environment will be compromised.

The essence of this bill is to ensure that the environmental assessment process is available to us should we need it. Regardless of how we get to it that is the bottom line and what is important in this case.

**Mr. Ross Stevenson (Durham):** Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure and some feeling of personal satisfaction to rise in the House today to speak during third reading of Bill C-13, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

I have the honour of being the chairman of the committee which pre-studied this bill. I am pleased and proud to see that there were so many positive changes made to the bill while it was in committee.

The quality of the witnesses and the expertise of the department staff was most impressive throughout our long study period.

It is the view of this government that the legislation before us today will help us to take a major step forward in our nation's campaign to anticipate and prevent environmental problems before they happen.

Bill C-13 is central to the over-all goal of Canada's green plan, which is to secure for current and future generations a strong and prosperous economy and a safe and healthy environment. In fact, the government believes that the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act will result in an environmental assessment process which is more powerful in its impact on decision making than any other environmental assessment legislation in the world.

During various speeches in the House over the last couple of days, and certainly in some of the comments made in committee, various individuals or groups were quite critical and some remain quite critical of this bill. It is important to examine what other environmental leaders around the world think about what is happening with this legislation in Canada.

I would like to refer to a letter which came from the head of the environmental assessment group in Holland. This is an unsolicited letter written to Mr. Ray Robinson, who was the former chairman of FEARO.

The contents of this letter were read into the proceedings of the committee at an earlier date, therefore I only want to highlight a couple of sentences. The letter is from Mr. Jan Jaap de Boer, head of the environmental assessment department of Holland, which has one of the best—if not the best—environmental legislations in the world at the present time. He writes:

We, the whole EIA-department, would like to congratulate you and FEARO with this milestone. These new elements will bring Canada back to the lead in E. I. A. regulation. And give us inspiration for new developments.

This hardly sounds like some of the comments that have been made at various times by certain groups here in Canada. He goes on to list some of the new developments in the Canadian act that are particularly important in the development of environmental assessment legislation on a world-wide basis.

I think we can say that this is now the best, or one of the best, pieces of environmental legislation in the world.

For the first time the act will entrench in legislation this government's desire and obligation to integrate environmental factors into planning and the decision-making process in a manner that promotes sustainable development. It will empower decision makers to make practical, responsible and informed choices.

As such, the act sets out clearly in law the roles and the responsibilities of all participants in a project development. It provides additional opportunities for public participation in all phases of the process, especially in the assessment of major projects. It requires that the process be administered before a federal decision can be taken to proceed with the project.