

Government Orders

in the long term. The response will establish how the government intends to go about using these economic instruments and to develop government policies that are environmentally sound.

[English]

A final example of our commitment is the proclamation of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act last January. I believe the legislation will ensure that environment is formally integrated into the project planning process of government. Through the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency we are already working hard to make sure that environmental assessments of new government policies and programs are done well.

These are important measures to establish a framework.

[Translation]

For years, governments have been talking about sustainable development. We have stated our commitment to this principle, but it has not been easy to ensure compliance.

That is why environmental groups have been asking for a governmental monitoring function and for independent reporting that would focus on the government's environmental activities. They saw this as a way to force governments to keep their word. And just as persistently, our predecessors in government have steadfastly refused to take this route.

[English]

We are convinced that these initiatives will have far reaching effects within government and within society. I hope and believe they will move government and the country forward on the path from talking about sustainability to actually delivering in terms of government policies and programs. That is something Canadians can be grateful for today.

• (1235)

I want to particularly thank the parliamentary committee under the chairmanship of the hon. member for Davenport and also the members of the opposition who brought constructive suggestions to the table. I think all Canadians understand that whatever one's political stripe, when it comes to the environment we should be working on behalf of the whole country. Certainly we saw that co-operation in the work of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. If we can carry on like that in government, we will be doing okay.

[Translation]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, here we are back in the House after an exceptional summer during which many things happened.

First of all, in Quebec, under the Parti Québécois government—in partnership with our party, the Bloc Québécois, and the ADQ, the Action démocratique du Québec, with the support of many partners from all sectors of society, and in accordance

with the strong wishes of a majority of Quebecers—all of us in Quebec are moving toward the referendum, which, I am increasingly convinced, will give us a country, Quebec, in a few weeks. This is what happened in Quebec over the summer. Winds of change have been blowing and are getting stronger every day.

The Prime Minister of Canada, who says he is distinct—and I fully concur with him—mentioned that the coming referendum debate would be fun. With the winds of change getting stronger, the fun expected by our distinct federalist Prime Minister will become serious and I am sure that he will not find it so funny on October 30.

Other events have commanded my attention this past summer. As a result of a labour dispute, workers at Ogilvie Mills in Montreal have been on strike for more than a year. This is the only labour dispute in Quebec that is specifically due to the use of scabs, which is allowed by the Canada Labour Code. Yet, the Minister of Labour, our national aunt, a first class switch-hitter and former critic of the federal government, promised several times that she would resolve this intolerable situation. The leader of the No side in Quebec continues to say no to these Quebec workers.

Another major issue that is of particular concern to me is the raising of the *Irving Whale*. I would first like to draw a parallel between this issue and the bill before us today, in the hope that creating the position of Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development will help us avoid a similar mess. Let us hope that the federal commissioner can get involved in such federal matters in order to alert decision makers and, if necessary, stop or reverse decisions like the one to raise the *Irving Whale*.

This salvage operation, which was scheduled for the month of August, could be described as a total fiasco. In fact, not only the operation itself but the whole matter is a dismal failure. Everything, from the decision making to the environmental assessment, the awarding of the contract and the job itself, was done in an incompetent and irresponsible fashion. The first one to blame for this fiasco is the Minister of the Environment who, for reasons I would describe as very partisan, took serious decisions without proper thought. The minister's partisanship on this issue is obvious. Just think back to the announcement she made in this House, saying something like: "Twenty-five years have passed since the barge sank, and nothing has been done. But I, just 90 days after coming into office, made the right decision".

We now have proof that the minister's decision was in fact a botched job. The barge is still lying on the bottom of the Gulf, more than \$12 million was spent—taxpayers' money of course, the procedure selected is increasingly questioned, and a Federal Court judge even requested that she redo her homework as far as environmental assessments regarding PCBs are concerned.