

*Government Orders*

Second, we wanted a process that would be efficient and fair. Each project should receive the amount of time and the kind of assessment it requires.

Third, the government wanted legislation that would allow us to "anticipate and prevent" problems, rather than continue to struggle with the less effective and more expensive approach of react and cure.

Fourth, we wanted legislation that would encourage public participation and provide opportunities for the public to play a role in decision-making.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act is a good law designed to meet all four principles. It is the result of two years of broad consultations with a wide spectrum of Canadians, including governments, the private sector, native peoples, environmental and other special interest groups, the legal profession and environmental assessment professionals.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act delivers virtually all of the recommendations from those consultations. A major feature of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act is that it will end the uncertainty and the confusion created by recent court decisions based on the 1984 guidelines Order in Council.

By giving the federal Environmental Assessment process the power and the precision of law, both the efficiency and the effectiveness of the process will be greatly improved.

While the current guidelines Order in Council has proven to be an effective environmental planning tool, the past six years of experience have identified a number of problems. For example, the current process does not allocate time and resources according to environmental risk. As well, the current process provides many opportunities for duplication in assessments between different federal agencies and between different jurisdictions.

In Bill C-78, Mr. Speaker, we believe we have achieved a number of substantial advances that will solve most of the major shortfalls of the old system. It will, for example, ensure that our environmental assessment resources are focused where they are most needed by directing projects into process streams according to their degree of environmental risks. Projects likely to cause significant impact on the environment will immediately be subjected to mandatory study. Projects that are similar to ones that have previously been assessed will be candidates for class assessment, and projects that clearly

do not pose environmental risks will be identified on a government-wide exclusion list and be exempted from the assessment. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act will introduce mediation as a means of improving the efficiency of the public review process of major projects. Mediation will be the preferred choice for public review whenever all stakeholders are willing to participate and work toward a consensus on the potential environmental effects of a project and the measures necessary to mitigate those effects.

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Mediation will involve representatives of all groups which have a direct interest in or are directly affected by a proposed project. In this manner, Canadians who are most involved with and most concerned about a proposal will be able to communicate effectively with each other, with the project proponents and with the responsible federal authorities.

To minimize the duplication of assessment processes, joint review panels will be established where another party or jurisdiction also has the responsibility to assess a project. The other party could be a provincial government, the government of a foreign state, a body set up under a comprehensive land claim agreement, a federal regulatory authority.

Further, another federal public review process can be named as a substitute for a panel review under the new act. One example of a substitute panel may be the National Energy Board.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to remind hon. members that the government is also establishing a parallel environmental review process for all proposals that require a cabinet decision, whether that relates to policies, programs, major projects, or to new legislation. The federal government is committed to an environmental assessment process for all its decisions, one that will preserve cabinet efficiency and confidentiality, but at the same time ensure that all decisions are open to public scrutiny.

[*Translation*]

An environmental impact statement will accompany the announcement of any cabinet decision. Thus, Canadians will be invited to examine thoroughly these public statements and Ministers could be called before the Standing Committee of the House of Commons on the