

Oral Questions

government policy is announced". Despite this, as we have just seen from his colleague, the Minister of the Environment has been repeatedly brushed aside like an old shoe by his colleagues.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, like a young shoe.

My question is: Will the minister undertake before this House that when the next budget is brought down an environmental assessment of all of its components will be tabled simultaneously? That is the promise of the green plan. Will the minister commit to keeping his promise?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the hon. member for Lasalle—Émard would rectify himself and at least say that I am a young shoe since I always felt that I have a lot of soul.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Charest: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the hon. member attracts attention to the fact that this government has committed itself since June 1990 to doing environmental assessments of policies that make their way through the cabinet system.

In fact we are one of the only governments in the world that has obliged itself to this process. It is so new that there is very little methodology around the world from which we can borrow to undergo this process. It is a very important challenge for this government. It would be a very important challenge for any government in the world to do what we have committed to do. We have made great progress in that area. He has witnessed that, and we will continue to make great progress in that area as we today are meeting all the commitments we have made in Canada's green plan.

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CANDU III

Mr. J. W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Some months ago the minister announced that the agreement had been reached with the Conservative Government of Saskatchewan for development of the CANDU III nuclear power prototype in that province.

This followed several months of unproductive negotiations with the Government of New Brunswick.

Subsequently, as we all know, a New Democratic government was elected in Saskatchewan and a policy conference by that party has recommended that the CANDU III nuclear development agreement be abandoned.

Will the minister please advise if the CANDU III nuclear agreement ever was actually signed with the Government of Saskatchewan, and has the new government confirmed its commitment to it?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, there was a memorandum of understanding signed between the Government of Canada and the then Government of Saskatchewan. In the memorandum of understanding which was then followed by an agreement between Sask Power and Atomic Energy of Canada there is a period of time, namely of six months, whereby the feasibility of a CANDU III system for Saskatchewan is to be explored.

• (1500)

Additionally thereto Saskatchewan would have tremendous advantages in terms of a world mandate on licensing. This would create for Saskatchewan not only the diversification that some people of Saskatchewan look for but which we also need in terms of the kinds of questions that were asked today about the agricultural community and the diversification we need on the prairies.

There is also a back-out clause of \$2 million, but I say to the hon. member that the Government of Saskatchewan will examine this and will have to make a determination whether it wants to go this route. I remind the hon. member that Saskatchewan presently provides 20 per cent of the world's uranium. I believe it has the most cost effective uranium mining virtually in the world today. It is the largest single private employer in Saskatchewan, and I would think the Government of Saskatchewan would want to think long and hard before banning the nuclear option.

Mr. J. W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, in view of the uncertainty that does exist in Saskatchewan concerning this project, is the minister ready to receive competitive initiatives from other provinces of Canada, notably from New Brunswick where I understand that belatedly keen interest still does exist?