

Private Members' Business

every year. There is the issue of the world's exploding population and the question of how it will support itself in the future.

For the first time in our history, human activities are undermining the stability of the ecosystem on a global scale. The impact is worldwide. No one anywhere can or will be able to escape.

The impact is economic. It threatens our very way of life; it threatens our ability to sustain ourselves. The impacts are intergenerational. We are very, very conscious of the fact that the futures of our children and our grandchildren are very, very much at stake.

Does this mean, however, that there can be no growth due to the dangers which exist? The answer is, I believe, and I think this is a view shared by many members of this House, is that that is not the case.

In 1987, after four years of deliberation, the Brundtland commission reported and provided us with a guideline which has been adopted more and more throughout the world. That guideline's term, of course, is sustainable development. In using that term, the commission meant, "meeting the needs of present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

In other words, the Brundtland commission was talking about the fact that we could no longer afford to live off the earth's capital. We could not longer afford to destroy and deplete our resources. We must anticipate, and by anticipating prevent environmental degradation. We must ensure that environmental considerations are a part of the decision-making in the first instance rather than an afterthought as has unfortunately been the case for so many decades.

This government is committed to the concept of sustainable development. We recognize environmental assessment is a critical tool in achieving that sustainable development. We are committed to providing the Canadian people with a comprehensive environmental assessment process which will be applied to all federal activities and which will ensure that environmental considerations are at the very heart of federal government decision-making.

The environmental assessment act which will soon be before this House and its regulations will give the federal environmental assessment process a statutory base which, in my opinion, it desperately needs. It will mean that environmental assessment will be mandatory for all activities within the decision-making authority of federal institutions. It will more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all federal departments and agencies. It will begin to develop a systematic meshing of federal environmental assessment procedures with environmental procedures of other federal agencies and jurisdictions. It will also ensure, and I think this is of utmost importance, that Canadian activities abroad are environmentally sound.

In closing, I would like to thank the hon. member for Fraser Valley West for proposing this motion which has given all members of this House a chance to consider and to speak on the very important issue of the establishment of an environmental assessment process that is predictable, fair, open and accountable.

I wish, however, to propose a simple but in my opinion a necessary amendment to this important motion that will Valley West when he spoke to this House when introducing the motion. At that time he emphasized the fact that the federal government can only bind itself in the areas of federal jurisdiction.

I am proposing that his observation as expressed then be incorporated explicitly into the motion. Consequently, I move, seconded by the member for Selkirk:

That the motion be amended by adding immediately after the word "projects" the following:

"falling within federal jurisdiction".

I look forward to supporting both the amendment and the motion as amended.

Mr. David Bjornson (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, it is with great interest and concern that I rise today in the House to speak to Motion No. 458, calling for environmental impact assessments for all major development within federal jurisdiction. I strongly support this motion which has been introduced by my colleague from Fraser Valley West.

As a member of Parliament from Manitoba, this motion is of great interest to me because of recent environmental issues within my province. It is of great importance because it calls for the environmental assessment of all projects, both public and private. At the