

*Private Members' Business*

Also at that conference in Bergen, Norway had a report entitled "Bridging the Gap: An Agenda for Action", drafted by the delegates of the Non-Governmental Conference on the Environment and Development held in March 1990. They had a number of recommendations, again stressing the need for awareness raising and public participation. Most clearly they said that the public is very important in all of this process and that "the full recognition and legal protection of the environmental rights of individuals, groups and organizations, including unrestrained access to environmental information, is an essential requirement for the achievement of sustainable development". In other words, there has to be someone who can have access to that information and can make it available to the public who is not tainted by industry or government interests.

"By 1992", this group suggested, "national sustainable development audits and progress reports should be prepared, publicly financed and published annually by an independent body". That means in every single jurisdiction, including Canada. These audits should focus on the quality of a nation's environmental health, its natural resources and endangered ecosystems and species. Resource centres and data banks should be established. All this could be done in Canada under the auspices of an environmental auditor.

As the hon. member for Ottawa West indicated in her remarks, the Auditor General, the financial auditor of Canada, has indicated a great need for environmental auditing in this country. In his report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1990, he has a scathing report on the Department of the Environment which should be examined carefully by an independent body whose interests lie with the Canadian environment.

• (1740 )

All sorts of industry representations are made to government, but the environment needs a voice at the cabinet table and needs a voice to the public. The Auditor General said that the department's program evaluation coverage was inadequate and that it had evaluated less than 10 per cent of its programs. For example, it had not evaluated any of the Canadian parks service programs, even though it had half the department's person-years and a \$387 million budget.

The Auditor General also talked about the Minister of the Environment being required to report annually to Parliament on the administration and the enforcement of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. No report has been presented from the time the act was proclaimed in June 1988 until June 30, 1990, when the Auditor General wrote this report.

I see you signalling my time is up, Mr. Speaker. I respect that. Thank you for much for the opportunity to address this important initiative. I wish the member for Ottawa West the best of luck in gaining support for this motion from the government side.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport):** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief, but first of all, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Ottawa West.

[*English*]

She has put forward a very interesting proposition upon which she has already very clearly elaborated. In essence, she is telling us that the government, any government for that matter, would be well served by the services provided by an environmental auditor general who would, by virtue of the work carried out under such auspices, offer the government of the day a very important tool in the decision-making process. Nothing would be more desirable at this point when governments, ministers, and decision makers are embracing the concept of sustainable development than to proceed by adopting this specific proposal.

The hon. member for Ottawa West has elaborated on how the environmental auditor would operate. It is interesting to note that the Auditor General noted in his report: "Parliament should expect government to devise acceptable means of being held accountable for the conduct of its environmental responsibilities." This is in a letter that the member for Ottawa West has written, alerting us to her motion.

The Auditor General is very precise, accurate and timely in that particular remark. The private member's motion of the member for Ottawa West reflects that timing. We congratulate her and hope that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment will give us the good news that the government has no objection to having this method proceed to committee for an appropriate and thorough examination.