

Private Members' Business

isters of the Environment because she wants to be the star performer instead of merely a member of the chorus.

The 1993 report of the Committee on Competitiveness of the Resource Industries pointed out:

The applicant has no way of knowing at the onset of the approval process what the regulations will be, the amount of time that the approval process will take, what it will ultimately cost, or what the outcome will finally be.

I definitely agree. It is time for government to get its act together.

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this evening and speak in support of Motion No. 292 which was put forward by my colleague, the hon. member for Timiskaming—French River.

The hon. member and I have much in common when it comes to sport shooting and matters pertaining to our great Canadian outdoors. We also share similar views when it comes to mining issues.

I congratulate my government colleague for submitting this motion to the House. Mining is a very important activity in northern Ontario. It is crucial to the economy there as well as in many other areas. Also, the fact that he is representing his constituents' concerns really matters. It should be the first and most important duty for us all.

As a member from southwestern Ontario, home of Canada's largest salt mine, I am pleased to speak in favour of the motion. I too recognize the importance of mining to the Canadian economy. The motion states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider implementing a new program of mining incentives which would encourage exploration and development in Canada.

That is certainly consistent with our red book. I refer to the October 15, 1993 mining policy announced by the hon. member for Sudbury, now the Minister of Health:

The mining industry is a vital part of the Canadian economy. Not only is it the lifeblood of over 150 communities, but it accounts for 330,000 jobs. A Liberal government will offer the leadership needed to ensure a strong future for Canadian mining.

One of the recommendations made in this policy is a direct connection to today's motion. Our policy proposed to undertake a comprehensive review of income tax laws with provincial and territorial governments, industry and other interested parties to ensure that the financial assurance mechanisms are complemented by federal tax policies and to provide policy support to help mining and mineral service industries expand their competitive advantage in foreign markets.

This is an important motion, especially in light of today's condition of the mining industry. It is facing a future of uncertainty. Public policy initiatives are needed to sustain the industry as a world class producer of mineral and metal products and to stimulate investment in mineral exploration and development in Canada.

I speak of an industry which accounts for 2.7 per cent of total national employment, one in which depleting reserves and mine closures outnumber mine openings, one which represents \$23.6 billion or 17 per cent of total Canadian exports, and one which contributed \$10.8 billion to the mineral trade balance. It is an industry in which the total value of mineral production was \$14.6 billion, or \$35.4 billion if fuel minerals were added. It is an industry which represents one of the highest industrial wages paid in Canada: \$847 per week in some of Canada's most isolated communities.

As a result of these challenges, we need an enhanced commitment from the federal government especially in the area of exploration stimulation which will attract sufficient levels of exploration investment to ensure that the economic growth rate and the level of Canadian mineral reserves will not continue to decline.

Our mining industry is a world leader in technology innovation and information. We must always strive to keep it that way. As members know, mineral exploration and for nearly a decade mineral reserves have been on a decline as the developing world attracts mineral investment away from Canada. They do this through aggressive marketing, joint ventures and legislative and policy changes.

• (1820)

The competitiveness of Canadian mining in the 1990s is plagued by uncertainty. There are disincentives now in the mineral investment climate that are discouraging proper investment levels which are needed to maintain a reserve base.

These factors include mineral taxation, exploration incentives, environmental assessment, land access, aboriginal land claims, mine reclamation deductions and security of mineral tenure. The mineral potential in Canada is as inviting as any other country in the world. However we cannot maintain our position as a world leader among mineral producing nations unless steps are taken to reduce the doubts.

I am sure all members from both sides of the House understand full well the implications of inadequate incentives for primary mineral exploration. Without ample exploration the mineral reserves necessary to replace what is being mined today will not be found. For many reasons, exploration levels have dropped dramatically since the mid-1980s. We all realize there is no quick fix for this problem nor do governments currently have the financial capacity to intervene in a significant way.