

Government Orders

actions. This bill is the first acid test, really, of a government's concrete commitment. I think that to be fair, it is somewhat short of perfection.

Mr. Brian O'Kurley (Elk Island): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member fails to say that this bill will pass the test of public scrutiny. I would like to help the hon. member by pointing out that the government believes that public participation is essential to achieving an appropriate integration of economic development and environmental protection. This act will specifically improve public awareness and participation by early notification. For example, proponents will be required to inform the public through advertising and other appropriate means of major project proposals at an early stage of the assessment process. Public comments will be invited at that time.

Then there is the public registry which will be established for each project to facilitate access to information on that project.

As well, there are the public hearings. Review panels for major projects being assessed will be required to hold public hearings to allow the public to present their views and recommendations.

As well, there is public input. Public comments must be considered by the responsible authority before making a decision on a project which has undergone an environmental assessment.

As well, Mr. Speaker, let me point out that reports and follow-up are to be made public. When the minister receives a report from a review panel or from a mediator, it must be made public. Similarly, the government response must also be made public. May I also remind the hon. member of the annual report. The minister will be required to report annually to Parliament on the implementation of the process. Then there are the regulations, including those that establish mandatory study lists and inclusion list, that will be published in draft form for public consultation.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, may I remind the member of the funding. Participants in public reviews or mediations will be eligible to apply for financial assistance. I would be curious as to whether or not the member remembers this.

Mr. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, all of those things are what one would expect as a minimum in this day and age from a proper environmental review process. We would expect all of those items which the hon. member has mentioned. As far as the funding, we have to wait and see how much the government is prepared to commit to intervenor funding and whether the groups that are affected by projects will be able to make their case known and will have the requisite financial assistance to be able to make their cases known. Until we have that information, which we do not have now, there is no way we can assess whether this government is serious.

Basically the litany of public participation opportunities which he has provided, and it is a good list, is really what we would expect from an environmental review process in Canada today. But I think we can count on more from this government.

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again to continue debate on Bill C-78. I want to focus my remarks at the outset on the remarks of my colleague for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake when he talked about the undue haste of this government.

What we have seen with the process of the prestudy committee that has been established, and now we are into second reading debate on this, is a real treachery. Canadians who are watching this debate and wondering what is going on here should know that what is going on is the government is trying to rush through this legislation.

I know there is an impatience among Canadians for real environmental assessment review legislation. They must be curious as to our opposition to this legislation. We have to get it right. Canadians are impatient. They want real environmental assessment review, but this Bill C-78 is not it.

As the associate critic for environment for my party, I have reviewed the legislation at length. What I see in the legislation is a real smoke and mirrors game. It would indicate from the briefing notes that this was exactly what Canadians wanted, that it is part of the over-all plan of this government which they say, and which should be commended, that there will be a real priority given to the environment.

The bill was first introduced on June 18, 1990. It was there to address longstanding dissatisfactions concerning environmental assessment at the federal level. But it was