

*Private Members' Business*

Madam Speaker, this is an important motion which deserves consideration.

As for setting up an assessment process, we know the Government will shortly be tabling legislation to strengthen the present assessment process which has become obsolete. The forthcoming legislation is the result of wide-ranging consultations that took place in this country between November 1987 and March 1988, during which the Government consulted with the provinces, the territories and numerous experts.

We can therefore expect the new legislation on the assessment process to ensure consideration of environmental impact phenomena when building public or private infrastructures.

Madam Speaker, several provinces, including the province of Quebec, have already passed similar legislation. The Quebec legislation on the environmental assessment process goes back to 1972 and was amended in 1978. Changes were made in the housekeeping provisions for preparing and reviewing impact studies where the Government is involved in issuing permits for projects that are subject to the new process.

Provision has been made for the public to be able to express its concerns to the Department of the Environment with respect to these projects.

The process must be administered in accordance with regulations established by the Government. The latter may exempt a project and issue a permit in order to repair or prevent damage caused by a real or apprehended disaster.

Under this legislation, environment means water, air and land or any combination of one or the other or, generally speaking, the interacting natural systems, including living organisms. But Quebec went quite a bit further, because the regulations on environmental impact assessment and review broaden this definition to include fauna, flora, human communities, cultural, archaeological and historical heritage, agricultural resources and the use made of the surrounding resources.

Under the law, the Deputy Minister of the Environment or the Government may issue the authorization certificate.

The technical services of the Quebec Department of the Environment check to see whether the project will be authorized by the Deputy Minister or subject to the

environmental assessment and review process. In the latter case, they prepare a guideline for the impact study to be carried out, in consultation with the developer and the other departments concerned.

Later, they have the Environment Department review the impact study and make recommendations concerning the environmental acceptability of the project and the appropriate control and follow-up. Once all that is done, they supervise the implementation of the conditions contained in the decree or authorization certificate.

The Environmental Public Hearings Board is responsible for helping the public review the application. It holds public hearings on the project at the Environment Minister's request and writes a report on the public's concerns for the Minister.

Every citizen is entitled to a healthy environment and to environmental protection, and in accordance with the amendments made to the Act in 1978, may take legal action against a developer if the law is not obeyed.

So I think that the Quebec law might assist the federal Government with the legislation it is preparing to present on the assessment process.

• (1740)

I was just saying that I had reservations about the Member's motion as regards legislation on private installations. I think that the Hon. Member will agree with me that legislating on private installations is impossible without federal-provincial agreements, because private installations often fall under provincial or municipal jurisdiction and federal-provincial coordination would be required in order to legislate.

Our Government is not a dictatorship and we do not impose our views on all the provinces. We will therefore have to cooperate with them in order to come up with satisfactory legislation.

The Hon. Member in his speech referred to the Government's environmental achievements. I think that since 1984, we have made great strides in terms of the environment. I was just saying that because we have inherited 50 years of uncontrolled industrial development, we face a big challenge today.

One of our Government's major achievements was to pass an environment bill last summer which provides very heavy penalties and fines for those in the private sector who continue to pollute our environment.