

*Canadian Environmental Protection Act*

Every year the Province of Ontario alone produces 1.5 million tonnes of wastes. The Great Lakes contain some 800 highly toxic chemicals. Rivers such as the St. Clair and Niagara contain a deadly mix of pollutants. Air pollution is threatening our wildlife, lakes, and forests.

This week in Montreal over 40 nations gathered to discuss the growing problem of the depletion of the earth's ozone layer. Canada is proud to host this major international environmental conference, and the Minister of the Environment has taken a leading role in getting the conference to reach a binding protocol.

Chemicals like chlorofluorocarbons, PCBs, Mirex, and ozone are all around us. From the clothes we wear to the food we eat and to the very paper I have in my hand, these chemicals and thousands of others play an important role in our daily lives.

There are over 100,000 known chemicals in use in the world today. How we develop, market, distribute, and dispose of them is vital to the proper protection of our environment. As new chemicals come into use, Canadians deserve to know what effect they will have on their environment. Canadians also deserve effective laws which punish those who deliberately pollute our air, land, and water.

Two years ago, 11,000 litres of dry-cleaning fluid were dumped into the St. Clair River, causing what has come to be known as the blob. Underwater disposal sites have left toxics seeping into our waterways. Uncontrolled smoke-stacks dump thousands of tonnes of sulphur dioxide into the air, causing acid rain which is killing our forests, lakes, and rivers. The Windermere Basin and the Sydney tar sands also present severe strains on our environment.

The Government has acted to clean up each of these spills with effective programs, but we need legislation in place which prevents this kind of thing from occurring. We need laws that concentrate on prevention and not on reaction. The Canadian Environmental Protection Act will do just that.

Industry wants this legislation in order to improve credibility with its workers, its clients, and the public. Industry is also looking forward to the predictable regulatory process which the Canadian Environmental Protection Act will provide. Labour wants it because, coupled with the workplace hazardous materials information system recently enshrined in law by this Government, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act will increase protection for workers who are often exposed to the highest concentration of chemicals, biotechnology products and radio-nucleides and the like.

● (1730)

Environmental groups also want to see this legislation in place because it strengthens the federal environmental legislative base. Bill C-74 is good news for all Canadians. It is a tangible response to the public's concerns and those of

industry, labour and environmental groups as well as other sectors of society.

In view of the importance of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act as a legislative initiative, we regret that the Minister of the Environment is unable to be here with us today. However, the House will be pleased to know that the Minister of the Environment is indeed heading the Canadian delegation to the United Nations environment program diplomatic conference on the ozone layer in Montreal. I know I speak for the House in congratulating the Minister of the Environment on his efforts in reaching this major international agreement. Getting over 40 nations from every corner of the world to agree on a program that will reduce the threat to the ozone layer is indeed, as the Minister said, an historic event.

The ozone layer is crucial to the very survival of this planet. Its shield protects our agricultural crops, our wildlife and ourselves from the very harmful effects of the sun's rays. Bill C-74 will give us the legislative tool we need to meet our international commitments. We can stop depletion of the atmospheric ozone through stricter control of the manufacture, importation, use and export of CFCs and other ozone-depleting substances. We are indeed pleased about this and we congratulate the Minister.

The proposed Canadian Environmental Protection Act is not an omnibus Bill which will consolidate all the environmental protection authorities of the federal Government. It was never intended to do so. Environmental protection provisions are found and will continue to exist in other federal statutes that address and regulate activities in such sectors as agriculture, transportation and energy.

The environmental considerations in these statutes are an integral part of the over-all regulations of these sectors and cannot be separated from the other aspects. The Canadian Environmental Protection Act will, however, provide the framework to enable federal Ministers to integrate environmental considerations more effectively into their policy-development activities and programs.

Bill C-74 represents the outcome of a consensus-building process that began two years ago with the creation of the Environmental Contaminants Act amendments consultative committee and of the multi-stakeholder group that produced the report entitled *From Cradle to Grave: A Management Approach for Chemicals*. The tabling on December 18, 1986, of a draft Environmental Protection Act for discussion and consultation followed.

The consultation process that took place following the December tabling that brought us the Canadian Environmental Protection Act has been both extensive and intensive. Information and consultation sessions were held across the country. Bilateral and multilateral meetings included representatives from provincial and territorial Governments, industry, labour, environmental groups and indeed the general public. These meetings resulted in over 300 briefs being