

Government Orders

We look at the major projects out there and how they have fumbled the ball time after time. You never missed a snap. I have looked at the old footage. But these ministers have played a lot of ball without a helmet and it worries the public out there that this government has not really shown the kind of really serious interest in protecting the water quality, the forests, the wildlife, air quality and even our international commitments on global warming, the ozone and so on.

I would describe this as pretty gummy legislation. The Liberals say there are still baby teeth. We may hear from the minister later in the week that this is dentured legislation.

Let me look, in somewhat more depth, at some of the particular projects in relation to this legislation and see where it would lead us. There is the discretionary power and the ability of the government to move to mediation rather than to public review panels and to not have included legislatively, as it should be, intervenor funding which should be in there with a trigger that the public can access so that they know if there is an initial screening being done, they can trigger certain kinds of funding. If it is a review panel or mediation it is there and it can be triggered if necessary through the courts.

The government is sending out a mixed message. It is giving the hubbub, you do not need to worry message to the provinces and the territories and it is giving: "Don't worry, be happy"—you know the little whistling song, Mr. Speaker—to the private sector: "Don't worry, be happy. As soon as this is in place, you will be able to go on with your major projects because we have got all these discretionary opportunities with this legislation".

As my friend, the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard pointed out, there is going to be an election fairly soon and the New Democrat government is very likely going to have to redraft some major parts of this legislation because it is pretty loosey-goosey. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you do not like loosey-goosey legislation and neither do I. We should have got nose to nose and shoulder to shoulder a little earlier on all sides of the House and moved forward a better quality of legislation, but I guess the government had more members and it decided that was not the way to go.

My friend from The Battlefords—Meadow Lake did do an excellent job in getting it patched up a bit. The Liberals swung in there from time to time and got a few Johnson & Johnson bandages on to the legislation, but there is work to be done in the next few days. I hope the government is going to co-operate in putting some serious thought to accepting some of the major amendments that we have proposed. I know it has accepted many, but there are some more to be accepted. I think the public wants to know that this is going to be truly workable and useful legislation.

• (1240)

I was looking, just for a moment, at what is called the "Communications Synopsis". It is stamped "secret, for the ministers' eyes only" but it is always worth having a look at. It is called "anticipated impact of having this legislation passed". It is anticipated that 90 per cent of Canadians are going to think very highly of it.

It is expected that media attention could be a four on a scale of five. The media are going to give this a four, and possible headlines. These are the headlines expected. I will just give you two headlines. The positive one that the minister expects is "Government Reform to Aid Sustainable Development", the negative one could be if things did not go well with the media this week: "Feds Back Off Environmental Promises".

I look forward, over the next few days, to participating in the various motions as they come up. I regret that there are only 10 minutes with each opportunity, but I suppose there will be a number of opportunities for me to carry on in dissecting this legislation so that the public knows exactly what there could and should be in it and what is not there.

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to add my voice to the debate on this very important legislation and on the so-called technical amendments that the parliamentary secretary has put forward this morning.

I wonder about the timing of the introduction of this legislation. One wonders if the legislative agenda of this government is really as out of control as it appears when the Minister of the Environment has to attend, as the parliamentary secretary has indicated, a very important