

*Routine Proceedings*

Quebec, which has been a leader in environmental assessments in Canada and acted with exemplary consistency and rigour, will thus continue to assure Quebecers of an open, effective and full process.

From Quebec's viewpoint, the federal minister's initiative has nothing to do with better environmental management. It only appears to be an unjustified intervention in an area already very well managed by the Quebec government. This is another concrete proof of the federal government's ability and eagerness to create duplication and increase costs.

• (1030)

[English]

**Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni):** Mr. Speaker, for those who are a little bit vague about what the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act really is, it is an information gathering process. That is really what we are talking about. It is used to predict potential environmental impacts on future projects.

The old act was passed by the previous government. However, it was somewhat like a eunuch; it was there in body but it was not very productive because the regulations were not there. I am pleased to see that we are finally getting to the point where we have the regulations coming down.

The problem with the old bill was that there were a number of exemptions. Hopefully these exemptions, for example radioactive waste and exports of oil and gas and hydroelectric projects, will be covered in the regulations.

It has taken us seven years to get where we are today and I am really pleased that we are here. I do have some concerns but they are hard to address because we do not have the regulations in hand as yet. There have to be clearly spelled out rules on what is and what is not subject to these rules.

One major problem is the federal-provincial overlap which the minister has addressed. Until we get rid of this turf war about whose ground it is, federal or provincial, we will be forever fighting about what goes on. The Kemano project is a good example. In some areas people said: "It is clearly provincial" and other people said: "No, it is federal because fisheries are involved". This has to be clarified. For example right now Alberta has an agreement in place but it is really agreeing to agree. We have a long way to go.

In terms of the process, I understand from the minister that on minor or fairly simple projects, it will go along quite easily. It is when we get into the contentious ones that we really get into the glue.

My riding of Comox—Alberni includes Clayoquot Sound. I have been part of the process over the last 10 years. It was sitting on the back burner and then heat started to rise to the point where it was really boiling a couple of years ago. I was able to watch

the different processes, the round tables, the square tables, the oval tables. It was open and transparent. However, it became very clear to some people at the table that the process was not going to solve their problem, so they walked away from the process.

We need to have open, clear dialogue. We have to realize that if the agenda of particular people is not going to be solved and they walk away from the table that the government is going to have to step in. That is a double-edged sword because the previous government ruled that in Kemano no environmental assessment was required. We have paid dearly for that in B.C. because we have been fighting for the last number of years. Business is mad, the environmental community is mad, the fishermen are wild and the public is confused.

That is what happened by going the wrong way. In the Clayoquot Sound decision basically the full spectrum of ideas were there. The provincial government stepped in and said: "This is where it is". I believe that was a good ruling.

The government is on tender ground on this one. If it goes to cabinet after the review that is fine. It would be highly dangerous if the government then ignored that review and went off on another track.

In summary, we have to wait until we see the regulations and really have a chance to look at them because that is really what is going to make it work. I look forward to having a look at them and moving ahead.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

I am wondering if I could seek unanimous consent of the House for two minutes to respond as the New Democratic environment critic and as the critic in the previous House who sat through much of the creation of Bill C-13. I would like unanimous consent of the House to have two minutes.

• (1035)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the Minister of the Environment has chosen to use Statements by Ministers to proclaim the act today. I think it is an important use of the House to take this route today.

I am also very pleased to see that the act has finally been proclaimed after the amount of time it took in development.

The act has the potential to be the most important environmental and economic legislation that this country has at this time. For that reason I was happy to participate in its development and now to see it proclaimed.