

declaratory power; cut the federal role in wildlife conservation and protection; cut the federal role in soil and water conservation; cut the federal role in forestry; cut the federal role in mining; and frustrate any ability to play a leadership role in international environmental protection.

During times of economic recession, like those we now face due to federal economic and political mismanagement, levels of government are pressured even more to reduce environmental protection for its citizens in order to compete with these big business interests.

During the environmental Olympics, when levels of government are inclined to compete to cut corners on the environment and leap high for business investment, we must remember it is the people of Canada and the wildlife, plant and animal, for which we are stewards. That is really what this discussion is all about.

Entrenching in the Constitution the right to a healthy and safe environment is more than just words during constitutional talks. It is essential, absolutely essential for maintaining the integrity of the planet we are leaving to our children.

Ensuring every Canadian's right to a safe and healthy environment would realize a very, very substantial step forward. There are several leads which could be followed in this regard.

Just six days ago the leader of the New Democratic Party, the member for Yukon, announced a proposal for a social charter which would place in section 36(1) of the Constitution the responsibility of the government to ensure a clean environment.

The government of Ontario has recently initiated a task force on an Ontario environmental bill of rights which sets out to examine the public's right to a healthy environment; improvement to protection through improved court access; the escalation of public participation; whistleblowing protection; government responsibility and accountability for the environment.

The governments of Yukon and the Northwest Territories both have provisions to protect the environment.

Private Members' Business

The Northwest Territories adopted the Environmental Rights Act in 1990, providing environmental rights and allowing individuals to sue other individuals for contaminating the environment.

In 1991 the Yukon government enacted its Environment Act which provides that the people of Yukon have the right to a healthful natural environment allowing individuals to sue the government and other individuals if this right is infringed.

Support for my motion is support only for that which surely each and every member of this Parliament and every Canadian should expect, that the environment we all share should be safe and healthy. Implicit in this is a number of implications and assumptions.

We as individuals and as government have the responsibility to act to protect the environment. The Western Canadian Law Association in its October 22, 1991 brief to the Standing Committee on the Environment calls for a Canadian Constitution which acknowledges that Canadians bear a personal and collective responsibility to protect the local, national and global environment.

Ensuring the right to a safe and healthy environment involves recognition of what the West Coast Environmental Law Association calls the precautionary principle of environmental protection.

Gro Brundtland, chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development, stated: "I will add my strong support to those who say that we cannot delay action until all scientific facts are on the table. We already know enough to start to act and to act more forcefully. We know the time it takes from decision to implementation through practical effects. We know that it costs more to repair environmental damage than to prevent it. If we err in our decisions affecting the future of our children and our planet, let us err on the side of caution".

I also support the principle of polluter pays. Assigning financial responsibility for actions that have adverse environmental consequences is a principle of obvious importance in our market based society.