

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

## FIRST REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday afternoon, around this time, the member for Davenport, who chairs the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, tabled our report which contained a dissenting report by the Bloc Québécois.

I rose, pursuant to Standing Order 35(2), to present the Bloc's opinion, but the Deputy Chairman, who was busy doing something else, did not recognize me. Mr. Speaker, if you allow me, I would be very pleased to do so this afternoon.

**The Speaker:** It seems to me that what the member is requesting is acceptable to the Speaker and the House. He may now make his point.

● (1505)

**Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac):** Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks, I have heard numerous testimonies from various individuals and groups while serving as the vice-chairman of the committee on the environment and sustainable development.

Following debate which was quite lively at times, it became apparent that the positions of the Bloc Québécois and Liberal Party were irreconcilable. Opinions differed not on the wording or the terms and conditions, but rather on the very substance of the matter.

The report which the committee tabled yesterday calls for the appointment of a new authority, whereas we advocate the use of a structure that is already in place and has proven its worth.

In our view, it would be more appropriate to broaden the mandate of the Auditor General's Office and grant it the required resources to deal with environmental issues in a proper, thorough manner.

To all those who would loudly denounce this alternative as reactive and not in keeping with sustainable development, our answer would be that the proposed solution is nothing but an attempt to impress.

An appointed official has no business making policy. Our democratic system allows Canadians and Quebecers to elect representatives to govern the country and lead it ably on the path to sustainable development. It would be too easy to have an additional authority, a whipping boy, which would be made responsible for all decisions.

In this instance, the mandate of the commissioner of the environment will in many ways overlap the mandates of other authorities, notably the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, certain Green Plan programs and even Environment Canada.

We are not opposed to virtue and we acknowledge the importance of protecting the environment in any way possible. However, we felt the honest thing to do was to criticize this proposed new position which would merely provide another way out for a government unwilling to carry out the responsibilities entrusted to it by its citizens.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1510)

[Translation]

**BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis):** Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth time I rise in this House to speak on cuts to the unemployment insurance program. The first time was immediately following the budget speech. Then I spoke again at second reading and at report stage and finally, today, at third reading.

By my count, Bloc Québécois members have made 60 speeches on UI cuts in this House, that is to say over half of all speeches made on the subject. How come?

On the government side, efforts were made to wrap up these UI cuts in an omnibus bill, a catchall bill which contains interesting measures on the whole, but hides these cuts that signal further cuts to social programs affecting the less fortunate.

As the hon. member for Mercier said this morning, this is a very sad day indeed, because the less fortunate segment of the population is being attacked. But what did we just hear during Question Period? Answers that were, for the most part, disturbing. The government, which has saved \$1.3 billion in unemployment insurance, did not dare attack, in this budget, family trusts which benefit the wealthiest members of our society.

This means that people who already enjoy the best lifestyle in this country will continue to do so while, in an effort to reduce the deficit, the government will ask the less affluent to make a \$1.3 billion sacrifice. I would like to point out that \$1.3 billion is \$300 million over the projected cost of the infrastructure program which was announced by this government, is under way and involves the three levels of government.

If the Bloc Québécois members, the official opposition members, have spoken on this issue as often as they have, it was to show they had tried everything. Today is the last day. By moving amendments and having as many of our members as possible speak to this bill, we tried to make the government realize a change of attitude concerning the less affluent was in order. We have also recalled at every opportunity the positions government members had held when in opposition.