

*Emergencies Act*

to any kind of an emergency was an absolute necessity. We all went through the hurricane Hazel of 1967, the year of the snow white-out in the Niagara Peninsula. At that time children were in schools for as long as three days. We had to mobilize the ham radio people and people with snowmobiles to provide emergency services so that those persons might continue to live.

I feel that the Government has taken a strong, bold step forward in the area of planning and preparedness for a wide range of emergencies. The Government made a commitment and, as the preamble to the Bill states, it is a commitment to ensure safety and security during national emergencies—any kind of emergency. The Bill is divided in parts to cover that wide range of emergencies and what kinds of declarations would have to accompany each.

This commitment was fulfilled with the introduction of the Emergency Preparedness Act. We know that Bill C-77 is a complementary Bill to Bill C-76 which Bill provided for the revocation of the Emergency Planning Order passed in 1981. This order was criticized by practically all Parties in the House as a source of numerous misunderstandings and for its legal basis. It is based inappropriately and on a Crown prerogative rather than on statute law of the land. This means that to date the role, the responsibilities and the mandate of emergency preparedness in Canada has not yet been defined by statute or by an Act of Parliament. The proposal then to make Emergency Preparedness Canada an independent agency with a mandate to co-ordinate emergency planning at the federal level is viewed favourably by provincial Governments. In fact, they encourage the passage of such legislation.

This initiative is also an indication of the federal Government's desire to be ready and able to respond appropriately to such an emergency when it should arise in the protection and the security of Canadians and in a global environment that is becoming increasingly complex.

The establishment of Emergency Preparedness Canada as an independent agency with a mandate defined by statute is intended, first, to increase the Government's ability to prepare for and deal with emergencies. Second, it is to clarify the respective responsibilities of the federal and provincial Governments with a view to closer co-operation, co-ordination and preparedness for action. Third, it is to improve the co-ordination of the emergency measures and the emergency preparedness of both federal Departments and agencies.

This change in the status of Emergency Preparedness Canada will not affect its primary role or its mandate as the co-ordinator of federal emergency preparedness. The responsibilities of the various Ministers for emergency planning within their respective sectors of statutory responsibility remain unchanged. The transformation of Emergency Preparedness Canada into an independent agency will not require the commitment of any additional human or financial resources. The proposal will make it possible for Parliament to control the normal procedures—

• (1550)

**Mr. Hopkins:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hesitate to interrupt my hon. friend opposite, but we are debating Bill C-77 and Emergency Preparedness Canada is Bill C-76. I think that the Hon. Member is delivering the wrong speech. He should be on Bill C-77, emergency measures.

**Mr. Reid:** Madam Speaker, as I indicated, Bill C-76 is complementary; it is a sister Bill to Bill C-77. Emergency Preparedness Canada is an integral part of the operation of Bill C-77. That is why I am putting it before this House, in order that Members on both sides of the House will be able to look at the whole approach by the Government to emergency measures. I ask the Hon. Member opposite to keep in mind the purpose and the existence of Emergency Preparedness Canada.

The transformation of Emergency Preparedness Canada into this independent agency with a statutory background of approval will not require the commitment of any additional human and financial resources. The proposal will make it possible for Parliament to control, through normal procedures, the operation of a government agency that has existed and operated for a number of years without a mandate from Parliament.

Emergency Preparedness Canada will benefit greatly from its new status; its ability to prepare to respond to emergencies will no longer be linked to fluctuations in the interest of the public or of the Government. The advantages of those two Bills proposed for second reading are self-evident.

What is proposed is the repeal of an unjust, inhuman, obsolete statute, and of an ambiguous order, and replacement by two Acts that provide for coherent measured preparedness as a response to various types of emergencies. In addition, two Acts will offer a single, integrated federal approach to emergency preparedness.

Of course, all Acts can be improved upon. That is what my hon. friend from Kenora—Rainy River was referring to. While he indicated that this two-Act approach was a great improvement over the existing War Measures Act, there may be further improvements, but we must pass this improvement now.

However, they have been prepared with the interest of the general community of Canada in mind, with the aim of safeguarding their freedoms and civil rights to the maximum extent possible. This proposed legislation includes an extensive set of specific safeguards that would probably be neglected in the event of ad hoc legislation brought forth by a Government under the pressure of a time of crisis.

The interests of the provinces will also be protected effectively in emergencies, because there has been that consultation and co-operation in the approach to the legislation. The consultative mechanisms provided for in the Bills are without precedent in Canadian constitutional history. They guarantee