

Government Orders

The Minister of the Environment is very proud of the mitigation measures contained in this Bill C-13. The Minister of the Environment has talked about introducing a tighter definition of mitigation that requires a substantial reduction or effective control of environmental effects of a project.

The Minister of the Environment proudly says that these changes ensure minor reductions in the environmental effects of projects so that they cannot be trivialized in the process.

The member for Davenport has raised a matter here that indicates that we cannot trivialize this section of the bill if in fact we adopt his amendment. The Minister of the Environment does not want these matters trivialized. We have a way to ensure that that trivialization does not occur and we should support it.

At the same time we are recognizing that these pieces of the puzzle fall under the part of the bill dealing with decisions of responsible authorities and the way in which the decision of the responsible authority is applied.

I want to add one thing before I close in relation to this and that is relating to the Supreme Court decision on the Oldman dam and policy matters which the government is undertaking. The member for Skeena has talked about policy on a number of occasions here today. He talked about policy of the nuclear industry in Canada.

Right now the government is proceeding with a policy decision on agriculture relating to the movement of grain, the changing of the way in which the railroads could possibly be paid on the moving of grain, the Crow rate.

Mr. Speaker, you have been in the House during debates on the Crow rate. Now the Crow rate has changed to the Crow benefit and the Crow benefit is in danger because the government wants to change that policy.

That is a significant adverse effect on our environment if we take the grain off the trains and put it on to trucks and move those trucks down highway miles all over the western prairies.

That is a policy decision that under this legislation cannot be dealt with in the appropriate manner that

projects can be dealt with. We have to find a way to ensure that that is dealt with.

I add that by changing the way in which we move grain, we are not doing sustainable development in this country. We are doing something that is very negative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Before I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt, I wish that members would start to stay with the amendment, with the clause, with the motion. We are starting to develop a little more than just what we have here as far as the amendments are concerned. I would appreciate hon. members please to conform to the rules of the House.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, sometimes legislation is written so that it allows a considerable amount of latitude in the interpretation of a particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Yes, I appreciate that but ever since this morning I have considered a lot of latitude here. I wish that we could get right down to the nitty-gritty and close this thing off.

The hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, on a point of order.

Mr. Taylor: Just to comment, Mr. Speaker. I think you have been doing a great job today in allowing the flexibility to examine this bill in its fullest. I congratulate you on the fine work you are doing from the chair today.

Mr. Hovdebo: The type of flexibility that we are talking about in this bill is sometimes not the kind of flexibility we want. For instance, in this particular case, the flexibility here would allow projects to go forward if this amendment is left the way it is.

The clause presently says: "the project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects that can be justified in the circumstances". That leaves any interpretation that anybody wants to put on the basis for the decision being made.

• (1630)

I am not sure that we want that kind of flexibility left in this bill or in the regulations of this bill. Can we afford to approach this environment with that kind of flexibility? We leave many things to the discretion of the minister in this bill.