

Supply

an independent environmental assessment panel has completed its review.

• (1700)

I thought in a speech on a motion of this kind the hon. member, who after all is a Privy Councillor and very knowledgeable in these matters, might have told us what his position is in respect of the motion; but I did not hear him say that. I wonder if he would tell us whether or not he supports the motion and, if he does not support it, why he does not support it.

Mr. MacDonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, it is too bad the member was not here earlier and did not hear the minister's speech. If that were the case, I suppose I could have taken my time simply to repeat what the minister has said. It seems to me he has upheld—

Mr. Milliken: Do you agree with the minister?

Mr. MacDonald (Rosedale): I do agree with the minister, yes. I would hope the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands also agrees with the minister. If he does not agree with the minister, I would like to know in what way.

It seems to me that we have two responsibilities with respect to the situation in Saskatchewan. One is to ensure that the environmental review process ordered by the courts is completed. That is exactly what the Minister of the Environment said he would do.

I do not know whether or not the member for Kingston and the Islands opposes that process, whether he wants the courts to reopen the question, or whether he does not want to proceed with the panel that the minister has proposed to appoint again. If he does not support that, then perhaps he should be responding and explaining to me what his alternative is.

I thought the minister made it very clear as to what he would do. I think that the member for Kingston and the Islands should perhaps explain why he would be opposed to the project if in fact the environmental panel completes its work and gives it a clean bill of health.

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, I listened with care to the hon. member's speech. He used, as is his right, the motion before the House today to talk more broadly about Bill C-78 and the environmental assessment review process. It is important because this Rafferty—Alameda situation is indicative of the problems and the flaws that have developed in the

current process. It is that process and this motion, which is so well crafted by my colleague, that I think we are debating here today.

I would like to ask the hon. member whether or not he is going to be urging the Minister of the Environment to ask for a return of the federal funds, our tax dollars that have been allocated for this project, from Saskatchewan because it seems to have accepted that federal compensation under rather dubious circumstances. That is one question.

The second question refers to his assessment of Bill C-78 generally. The briefing notes for the legislation say one thing. It seems to be quite an attractive package, looking at the briefing notes, but on closer examination of the legislation it does seem that the government is saying one thing in the briefing notes and doing exactly the opposite in the legislation. I would ask for his comments on that.

Mr. MacDonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, first of all on the member's question about the funding that has been provided to Saskatchewan, if she were to look at it for a moment, she would see that this whole process is so upside down that people trying to sort out what is the correct responsibility would have a great deal of difficulty. The fact that the project could have carried on to the point that it did before a court order suggested that because of the environmental concerns it should be put on hold. It seems to me that this in no way is going to contribute either to the elaboration or the enunciation of environmentally secure projects or build much public confidence.

I have not heard anyone on the other side of the House deal with the substance of the project itself. I have heard most people deal with it in the context of the various decisions that were taken.

I think it may be useful—and I know that one or two of my colleagues tried to do this—to look at the project from some kind of an objective basis. Whether or not funds were allocated in a way that was not responsible is not possible to tell at this point. We have to allow the environmental review process to complete itself before determining what further federal responsibility there will be in the situation.

Turning to the second question about the difference of interpretation of the material provided for Bill C-78, this is not terribly surprising because the legislation as the minister indicated this afternoon is still in the process of