

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask all members of this House, and especially the Acadians among them, to join me in paying tribute to the Acadian community of Sept-Îles on this important occasion.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of the Environment.

In his discussion framework on the environment, which he published last week, the minister said: "Responding to the problem of global warming will be a formidable challenge—If we wait for all the answers, we will no doubt be too late."

Yet, in Alberta yesterday, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said that the government had agreed to drop national targets for cutting air pollution, and further, that Ottawa had no intention of penalizing provinces that were responsible for high levels of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide.

How could he allow the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to agree to drop national commitments and targets for cutting air pollution, and if he has done that, does it not mean that he and the government as a whole think that his exercise in considering changes in the environmental policy of this country is nothing more than a sham and a public relations exercise?

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition should read more carefully the communiqué that was released yesterday by the federal Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

The first thing that he must note in this communiqué is that the ministers have decided that we must pursue, on a national and provincial level, the reduction of CO₂ emissions through as tough measures as possible.

They have also decided that this problem must be put into the context of the international scene. I agree completely with that. No definitive solution will be

brought forward on this without the full agreement of everyone involved in this pollution.

Canada will not give up its leadership role on this, and this government strongly feels that we must not exclude the possibility of going as far as making unilateral commitments if it can help with the development of an international convention.

Canada is very serious and we will never make a commitment without being sure that it will be fulfilled. Canada makes commitments when she can fulfil them. The way to do it is to define beforehand the right means of achieving the commitment.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that in 1988 his government made an international commitment to cut greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide by 20 per cent by the year 2005.

Does the government still maintain this international commitment? If so, how can it do it without having targets in this country for cutting air pollution?

• (1420)

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, it is very important on such a major issue not to distort the facts. Canada never made any commitment at the Toronto conference and no country in the world made a commitment like this. We still have to wait for one country to make the commitment. It is a very serious commitment and we will do it together.

As the hon. member knows, there will be a very important international conference in Brazil in 1992. This will be the forum where Canada will lead the world in signing an international convention on climate change.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment seems to have been contradicted not only by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, but also by the Minister of Finance.

Last week, the Minister of Environment stated on television that he had secured from his government for his Green Plan "a spending commitment". Yet, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance stated last Friday that the amount to be allocated had not yet been determined.