

*National Energy Board Act (No. 3)*

power can be transmitted over 1,500 or even 2,000 kilometres, something that was absolutely impossible a few decades ago. Consequently, problems are now arising that did not exist before. In fact, transmission lines have now become quite similar to pipelines. Oil and gas are transported across Canada over long distances; for instance, oil is brought from Alberta to Montreal across the provinces, thanks to a pipeline that is regulated by the National Energy Board. The same applies to natural gas. The natural gas pipeline runs from Alberta across the provinces, bringing the gas to Montreal, and soon to Trois-Rivières and Quebec City. This pipeline crosses the provinces under the provisions of national, federal legislation, and pursuant to a provision of a federal act, subject to authorization by the National Energy Board. So that is the situation with respect to oil and gas carried across Canada, and now, thanks to technological progress, we have a situation where electric power can be transmitted across the country, over rivers, across the plains and the mountains, across regions and provinces.

The main objective of the amendments we are proposing to the National Energy Board Act is to give the board the same powers and jurisdiction over power transmission lines it now has with respect to pipelines. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the powers we are conferring under the proposed legislation are not even as extensive as those that apply to pipelines. At the present time, the National Energy Board has certain powers with respect to international power lines. The act in question prescribes that the board must hold public hearings when an applicant wishes to export electric power or construct international power lines. For instance, today the National Energy Board is to publish its decision whether or not to authorize the exportation of electric power by Ontario Hydro from Ontario to the United States in fact, to one specific state. The decision of the National Energy Board is to hand down today is based on public hearings and is made pursuant to the provisions of the National Energy Board Act.

If we examine present practice and the present act, it is clear that Parliament has for some time been legislating with respect to electric power lines, and it is entirely erroneous to say that some people have implied in Quebec, that this was an entirely new step, something that had never existed before and that would constitute, as it were, an exceptional decision in the area of electric power, as though we had never passed any legislation on power transmission. In fact, the Parliament of Canada has jurisdiction over international or interprovincial electric power transmission, and Parliament has many times had occasion to exercise this jurisdiction.

• (1540)

The board has authority not only over the transmission of power from Canada to the United States, but it may also authorize construction of a power line for this purpose, by regulating its route, judging whether the line is in the public

However, the act does fall short in one area. I shall explain. Where pipelines are concerned, the National Energy Board Act contains provisions conferring certain general powers and imposing certain obligations on a company operating a pipeline, but there are no similar provisions to cover the case of a power transmission line. Some of these general powers and duties concern the acquisition, including acquisition by expropriation, and the transfer of property required for the construction and operation of the pipeline. These provisions are set forth in Part V of the National Energy Board Act. One of the proposed amendments is meant to compensate for the short-coming I mentioned earlier, so that the provisions of Part V, namely, the sections conferring general powers or imposing general duties on pipeline companies, will also apply to persons operating international power lines.

Mr. Speaker, in this bill to amend the National Energy Board Act, we are simply proposing, as I said before, a system, similar to the present one for pipelines, which regulates the acquisition, including acquisition by expropriation, and transfer of property for the construction of electric power lines. We are not proposing a single power or jurisdiction more than those existing at the present time with respect to oil and gas pipelines, and I would remind the House again that this power is not exercised by the Government of Canada nor by the National Energy Board because they are not the ones that proceed with expropriation.

If we look at what is now happening in Quebec with respect to the gas pipeline, for instance, we find that the Trans-Quebec and Maritimes gas pipeline now under construction, which should reach Trois-Rivières before the end of this year and Quebec City, I hope, some time next year, we find that what is happening is that TQM, the company building the gas pipeline is proceeding with the expropriation of the land it needs to build the gas pipeline, meanwhile complying with the provincial legislation in effect in Quebec, including environmental legislation and provisions for the protection of farmland, and so forth. It has been clear during the past months and the past year that TQM has had to comply with the provincial laws in effect which govern certain aspects of activities within the province. And the same thing happens when a pipeline is built, whether in Quebec or elsewhere. When a line is extended, the company involved is subject not only to federal legislation, but