

Supply

reason to these kinds of things, not just a direction to hold the project up.

These guidelines should be very carefully laid out. My understanding is that they are laid out in Bill C-78. That is exactly what I am speaking of.

I think you would agree with me, Sir, that we, as representatives, are to be custodians of the Treasury which the people of Canada put in our hands. They have told us: "Let us do it in a reasonable way and in a respectable direction".

In our area in five months we plant a crop, we see it grow, we harvest the crop, and in normal years we market a crop. It is pretty hard to explain to my farmers and the people in Saskatchewan that a review committee cannot get down to see the project in five months. It is very difficult.

Mr. Funk: It is your committee, Len.

Mr. Gustafson: It is very difficult, very difficult. The opposition is making accusations here. Let those accusations be made. I am not here today to make accusations. There have been enough accusations. There have been enough politics in this situation. I want to tell you that the local wildlife people support the project, and some of them quit their jobs with the wildlife organization because of this issue.

An hon. member: Not all of them.

Mr. Gustafson: Not all of them. I am not saying all of them, but those on the local scene did. This is the point that I make. Let there be a committee set up under guidelines that will review the process, but do not penalize an area because some cheap political group wants to take advantage of a project for its own benefit.

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I have an interest in this because my grandparents were married in Melita and travelled by cutter on December 4, 1894, to the Gainsborough area. They settled later in the Oxbow area, leaving behind I think close to a hundred descendants in that area now—most of whom I am sure vote for the hon. parliamentary secretary but, also, some of whom are New Democrats. I am sorry to say to the member for LaSalle—Émard I do not think there is a

Liberal in that area at the moment, but when he comes to lead his party that may change a little bit.

• (1620)

What I have heard from them, including the New Democratic relatives, is that the farmers of the area, the townspeople of the area see the merit of this proposal and that there is strong local demand for the project to go ahead. I want to ask the hon. parliamentary secretary whether there is majority support for the project in his constituency and in the area affected?

Mr. Gustafson: Again, I would say that 95 per cent of the people support the project, regardless of the political implications. As I said earlier, the former MLA for the NDP supports it, the former MLA for the Liberal Party supports it. I do not know of a reeve of a municipality or a mayor of a town who does not support this project, irrespective of politics. This project is needed. It is environmentally sound and it has unanimous support in that area. There are a few who do not support it, sure, but they are very, very few.

Again, I appeal, let us do the right thing. Let us move along with Bill C-78, bring in a set of guidelines that are workable. I believe it is our minister's intention to try to do that and I compliment him for it.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, we are talking here about the integrity of the process. If indeed the project is environmentally sound, as the member keeps alleging, why is the government not prepared to insist that there be a process in which the rest of the country can share the member's confidence?

What we are talking about here is whether the rest of the country will believe what the member seems to think is a matter of faith. It is quite conceivable that we could have a process that could determine that this project be stopped until such time as the panel reported, in which case the rest of the country could have the confidence that this member has. I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, that the rest of the country does not have that confidence.

Mr. Gustafson: One of the reasons the country does not have that confidence is because the opposition and people who do not know what they are talking about have been sending the wrong message.

Mr. Caccia: Explain why the panel resigned then.