

*Supply*

arrangement to allow me to participate in this very important debate.

Let me say that I agree in substance and merit with most of what has been said by the member. There are a few nuances to add and I would like to do so later on during my short speech. I would like to reserve most of my time for a question and answer period.

When I became the environment minister I was, of course, very much impressed by the importance of the burden of the portfolio. The more I studied the files and programs the more I could see that this is certainly one of the most important political challenges in the years ahead for all of us. There are days when there are negative feelings because it is very frustrating to be a minister, especially of the environment. We are squeezed between the high expectations of people and the government restraint placed on expenditures during a very difficult period.

One of the areas of the department which always gives me a lift is the parks system. The national parks, Parks Canada, are beautiful and Parks Canada is such a success that it is always encouraging for me to work in my department. When I experience a downfall I ask for Parks Canada people to come into my office and work on their programs and projects. Parks Canada is one of the country's greatest successes and is recognized all over the world. People should realize that our parks are not only beautiful for us but is an object of envy all over the world.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, Parks Canada is an agency from which we ought to draw inspiration when establishing our country's future environmental policy. During the few years since the Brundtland Report was made public a good many people have spoken with deep conviction—and they have my full support—of the new concept of sustainable development which was coined to describe our common effort to reconcile environmental and economic priorities. Sustainable development is indeed a major concept. Madam Speaker, let me tell you that primarily through Parks Canada programs our country has now been fractising sustainable development for nearly a century, without realizing it, as did Mr. Jourdain when he wrote prose. One hundred years ago, we Canadians came to the conclusion that natural expanses must be preserved, not only because they are truly magnificent but also because there is a cause-and-effect

relation between our future action in that field and the environmental benefits we stand to reap. For example, a number of years ago in Canada we had to come to grips with the ever present ecological problem created by economic development and tourism development and environmental protection. We Canadians, particularly those who work for Parks Canada, have known for quite some time that we must keep unsoiled the extraordinary wealth which we have chosen as sites for public parks and which will be our legacy to future generations. Yet at the same time the present generation should be able to enjoy all this. So how do we proceed? Because today's generation is ever more concerned over economic issues, development, jobs, as well as ready and practically unlimited access to our parks, we are faced with a conflict which must be resolved. Our policy in Canada is to go ahead and develop our parks, in so far as this will create jobs and attract tourists, of course, but never to the detriment of future generations.

So we did practice sustainable development even before these words gained widespread currency, and we can indeed stand proud of this achievement.

• (1220)

That being said, after these self-congratulatory and indeed quite legitimate comments, we must realize, as the hon. member pointed out, that it is absolutely vital to determine what remains to be done, and a great deal remains to be done! The regions, for instance. Canada has 39 different bio-regions. This is a measure of the tremendously diverse resources of this country, with 39 different types of bio-regions within its borders. We should be able to establish parks representing each of these bio-regions.

Today, after 100 years and some of the most successful efforts the world has known in this area, only 21 bio-regions are represented in the 24 national parks that exist today, but we have 39 bio-regions. This means that we must create 18 new parks. We now have to decide whether we have the political will and the budgetary commitment to complete the network.

Why the rush? I agree with the previous speaker that we must set a date. We cannot put off doing so indefinitely. The situation is changing so rapidly that we will never be able to reach our goal of 39 bio-regions if we let development gradually encroach on areas that are as yet unprotected. We can defend regions that are already protected, parks that already exist, but we can do very little to defend areas where we could and should create