

*Government Orders*

dent from government, it is well respected and it has the expertise, as we saw recently in its initial assessments of environmental auditing of the government.

For all these reasons I believe it can greatly enhance the government's auditing of its environmental performance. There is another advantage to this innovation. Within the work of the auditor general, issues of environment and sustainable development must be directly integrated into economic considerations. This kind of integration is what sustainable development must be about. It is not a separate vertical approach but rather a horizontal approach which must de facto involve every department of government.

What then is the substance of these amendments to the Auditor General Act that I am proposing today?

[*Translation*]

First, as I mentioned, these amendments establish the role of the commissioner of the environment and of the office of sustainable development within the office of the auditor general, as the official opposition has proposed. The commissioner would report directly to the auditor general and would work with him to evaluate the government's implementation of sustainable development policies and practices. The commissioner and the auditor general would also work together in reporting to the House of Commons on the government's practices in matters of ecology and sustainable development.

[*English*]

No matter who the auditor general is, the amendments bind the office of the auditor general and the commissioner for sustainable development to encourage consideration of environment and sustainable development in all official duties. They do that by explicitly incorporating sustainable development and environment into the Auditor General Act. They do it by requiring the auditor general to take environmental effect into account when preparing all reports to the House of Commons.

For the first time an independent commissioner has a mandate and responsibility to follow up and report on what the government is doing or failing to do in meeting its environmental commitments. I must say entre parenthèses that one of the first departments the office of the commissioner will be looking at is my department, the Department of the Environment. We welcome the opportunity of independent public review because we believe it will accelerate the integration of the two key objectives of sustainable development and their integration into the economy.

We know that the blaze of publicity that attends each auditor general's report of financial failings has caused governments in the past to move and to take a different path. We can expect an impact at least as great for reports of environmental shortcom-

ings and that publicity or the urge to avoid it should be a powerful spur to government action, a spur in more ways than one.

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At times this may make things uncomfortable for us in government. It may make things uncomfortable for us as ministers and as members of the government but we are prepared and welcome that discomfort if the end is better government for Canadians. Better integration of sustainable development is a key factor in making decisions.

Imagine if we had taken into account sustainable development many years ago when we were making decisions about how to allocate quota of the cod stock. Look at the price we pay today for the thousands of fishermen who do not have fish to catch simply because we did not develop sustainable fisheries, not only domestically but internationally.

I had the privilege recently of participating in an environmental trade mission to the Far East. In discussions several governments were very interested in the concept of the commissioner for sustainable development. They understand, as we understand, the times when a department of the environment is the only department responsible for sustainable development are gone. We need integration through the highest levels of government. I believe the influence of the office of the auditor general and the new commissioner for sustainable development and the environment will be able to deliver that cross-cutting analysis of all government policy.

[*Translation*]

The scope of the amendments goes beyond a mere institutionalizing of procedures for monitoring and reporting on government activities.

More directly, these amendments require all federal departments to take environmental action. They go further than the red book's commitment in that they vigorously promote sustainable development through government activities.

Under the Act as amended, each department has two years to prepare a strategy for sustainable development, to be presented in the House of Commons by the minister responsible. The strategy must be results oriented. It should include the department's objectives and a plan of action to attain those objectives.

[*English*]

In effect this legislation will make every minister a minister for sustainable development. For example, the industry minister will be responsible for the portfolio and also for ensuring the Department of Industry operates in an environmentally sound way. The same is true for the foreign affairs minister, the transport minister and all of our colleagues.