

Private Members' Business

that in the coming months we will be able to sign a document setting forth a formal, national approach. And I am fully supported in this conviction by the fact that Canadians expect us to pool our resources for this common cause.

[English]

Over the last year of consultations leading up to this legislative proposal, the Minister of the Environment has especially benefited from the wisdom of the Endangered Species Conservation Task Force, a group with representation from wildlife experts, environmentalists, farmers, fishermen, foresters, and the mining, pulp and paper, and petroleum industries. They are the people on the front lines. They have acted in good faith despite their often divergent interests.

She has asked the task force to reconvene to provide advice on some outstanding issues, including a strategy for education programs and the application of the legislative proposals to crown corporations. She would also like further advice on issues of cost and compensation. She is particularly concerned that farmers and aboriginal peoples, the stewards of the land, are treated fairly by a new law.

The minister asked the task force to give thought to how we can ensure the active participation of the maximum number of Canadians in protecting endangered species. In effect, how do we ensure that there is a national safety net for species at risk?

[Translation]

As we prepare for new legislation on the protection of endangered species in Canada, we should feel particularly grateful to the young people in this country. Students across the country have kept up the pressure on the minister. They have circulated petitions and sent thousands of individual letters into which they put a great deal of thought.

The minister means what she says when she wants Canada's young people to continue to help her write this legislation. The bill will be available on Environment Canada's green line on Internet, and the minister urges everyone to send their comments. We want to have the best possible legislation that will support economic growth while protecting genetic diversity and the species and ecosystems that constitute the biological basis of our world. We owe it to endangered species and to future generations of Canadians.

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-275, an act respecting the protection and rehabilitation of endangered and threatened species, tabled in the House on September 28, 1994 by the member for Davenport.

This bill provides for the identification, protection and rehabilitation of flora and fauna in Canada threatened or endangered by human activity and for the protection of habitat and the restoration of population. It gives the Minister of the Environment a mandate to develop and implement programs to restore and maintain these species.

I congratulate the member for Davenport for tabling this bill and for his devotion to the cause of ecology. The goal is a very plausible one.

• (1755)

It must be said that, despite international conventions and the very important United Nations conference on development and the environment held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, I note that, generally, countries and governments do not do enough in this area.

As you know, I come from Chile, which, like other countries in Latin America, has rich flora and fauna. However, there as well, certain species are threatened and endangered. There is the condor, for example, a huge and majestic bird that lives in the Andes, or the llamas or the guanacos. These are species that inhabit the countries of the Andes, Peru, in particular, and Chile. Fortunately, for the first time, the Chilean government has enacted legislation on the environment. Another example is Costa Rica, which has very special and wonderful flora and fauna and is also doing a lot to preserve its natural wealth.

Efforts in species preservation must be concerted. National and international co-operation must be established. Fish, marine mammals and migratory birds must be protected first and foremost. This bill provides for the creation of two organizations: the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada and the Committee on the Recovery of Nationally Endangered Wildlife.

It also authorizes any citizen to submit an application to the Minister of the Environment to have species added to or removed from the list of threatened or endangered species. The minister will have six months to respond to such applications and will have to table a full report on June 1 each year on the matter.

Canada still has a lot of work to do, despite its fine international reputation in environmental matters. In November 1994, the Minister of the Environment published a working document advocating the strengthening of laws to protect species threatened with extinction in Canada. In addition she announced new federal legislation in this area. At the moment in Canada, 236 species of flora and fauna are endangered, threatened or at risk.

Since the 17th century, Canada has lost at least 14 species of bird, mammal and fish. The situation worsens each year. These species are lost due to human activity. Over hunting is the most serious threat. There are fewer and fewer old forests. Wildlife is