

Private Members' Business

I think it is extremely important that while the environment assessment review process addresses the environment broadly, those disciplines which are affected, such as forestry, fisheries, mining, energy or agriculture very clearly have a statutory obligation and a statutory right to be involved in the environmental assessment process, whatever direction it may take at any given time.

This government addressed the need originally for environmental assessment review guidelines with Bill C-78, to enhance those disciplines, to make not only the initiating minister responsible for environmental assessment of departmental actions, in whatever department they may occur, but also giving the environment minister the authority to oversee and overrule the environmental planning of specific initiatives.

The government has placed a great cloak of security around the environmental process in this country and I applaud it and support it while expressing the caveat that it contain very clear and mandatory provisions for the operating entities, professions and disciplines to be involved in their specific areas of activity.

Another area where this government has made significant progress and, as the hon. member has mentioned will make an announcement next Tuesday, is in the area of Canada's Green Plan. It was on March 29, 1990, that the Government of Canada released the framework for discussion on the environment which began the process of the Green Plan, called "Our National Challenge". Its long-term objective was stated to be to make Canada the industrial world's most environmentally friendly country by the year 2000. There is a lot of evidence that we are making progress in that direction. It was to do that by ensuring that the activities of business, individuals, communities and governments are consistent with the concept of sustainable development. I believe that it has done that.

Canadians responded to the government's invitation to that discussion and, during the first phase, more than 6,000 people attended 41 information sessions held across the country. They asked questions, expressed concerns and they identified needs for action. In phase two, more than 3,500 people participated in two-day consultation workshops, in 17 capital cities and major

centres in the provinces and the territories. I participated in one of those in Fredericton and I want to tell you that it was a good consultation. It was the kind of dialogue that gave you confidence that this government really is in touch with the people.

I believe that when we see the green plan unveiled next week, it will reveal that that, in fact, is what has happened, that there has been close, intensive dialogue, there has been effective consultation, and we shall have a national environmental plan, a green plan that will truly address the needs, the aspirations, the goals and objectives of all Canadians. Mr. Speaker, that is consistent with the undertakings and the obligations of this government.

Mr. Caccia: Time is up.

Mr. Bird: As much as my hon. friend may really hate to hear this, this government in its throne speech in early 1989 said, and it was a major pillar of the throne speech, that we were going to address the environmental imperative.

• (1730)

With Bill C-78, with the Green Plan, with the environment committee report, in which my hon. colleagues have participated, on global warming and on climate change, and in this excellent document which I would particularly recommend to your attention, Mr. Speaker, with the Commons subcommittee on forestry addressing the federal role in the forests of Canada, one that even my hon. friend from Toronto would endorse, I am sure the government has truly endorsed, addressed, sustained, and is moving on an environmental imperative for Canada.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand to speak to the private member's motion put forward today by the member for Ottawa West. Her proposal to have this House and this government consider the advisability of establishing the position of environmental auditor general is a very welcome proposition to those of us in the New Democratic Party for many reasons. I think it is welcomed by all Canadians. There is no question that we have to hold the government and Canadians accountable for their actions relating to the environment.