

*Oral Questions*

**Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the minister.

I have read the plan of the government very carefully. Where the document states that we have to rely on voluntary compliance and that self-regulation is better than government regulation, that means there are no regulations, no environmental auditor, no staff assigned to monitor legislative regulations. It is this reliance on voluntary measures that has created the mess we are in, and the minister knows that.

In the last year, under the Environmental Protection Act, we have seen three prosecutions. Will the government announce today that it will bring forth whistle-blowing protection legislation so that workers in this country, if they want to act environmentally responsibly, will have their jobs protected? That would be a real directive.

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, in the green plan we talk about the Drinking Water Safety Act, the Canadian Oceans Act, the Wild Animal and Plant Protections Act, the National Energy Efficiency and Alternative Energy Act. All of them are time targeted. All of them have been committed to by this government. All of them will be before this House in the very near future.

The green plan does promote a number of legislative measures and a number of regulatory measures, but the act also affords a measure of faith in Canadians. They have responded well in the past and will in the future because Canadians want their environment cleaned up.

**Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, everyone wants the environment cleaned up, including the workers in this country who simply want protection so that they can participate in that cleanup without risk of losing their jobs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the same minister. It is clear that like the previous government, this government has no intention of prosecuting companies that pollute the environment. Will this government at least announce the creation of a charter of environmental rights, so that Canadians can do what this government is not prepared to do itself?

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, what this government has done is table a concrete action plan for the next five years which involves new federal funding totalling \$3 billion. That is what Canadians have asked us to do and that is what we have delivered. That is what it takes to get all Canadians at all levels of society involved, with us, with you, in a genuine environmental program.

• (1430 )

[*English*]

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. He keeps talking about the \$3 billion in the green plan, which in fact is 40 per cent less than he had previously promised.

Isn't this \$3 billion really an empty shell because not one nickel of that \$3 billion has been specifically approved by cabinet for any of the projects mentioned in the green plan and, in fact, if any of these projects come before cabinet, they could well be axed by the Minister of Finance of the President of the Treasury Board and never actually see the light of day? Is that not the truth?

**Mr. Andre:** Three billion dollars means nothing to those guys.

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, a \$3 billion empty shell must be a very huge shell indeed. We are talking here about \$3,000 million of fresh new federal money for the environment, associated with a program that has been fully approved by cabinet. I am not sure where my hon. colleague is getting the information that he is using for his questions. This is fresh new money. It fulfils a major commitment of our Prime Minister and of this government to ensure that our environment is protected for the years to come.

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, the minister says it is fresh new money, but in fact Canadians will know it is the same old stuff from this government that cut the Canadian Wildlife Service by 25 per cent and cut \$40 million from the energy division of the National Research Council, so it is the same old thing.