

*Oral Questions*

I met with the governments. I met with the proponents of the project. I met with the opponents of the project, and we went through all that back in late July and early August.

We have four documents before us. We have a licence. We have a court order. We have an agreement, and we have the terms of reference for the panel.

I can tell my hon. colleague that the conditions under the licence were fulfilled. I believe that up until last Friday the conditions under the court order were fulfilled, and we are now going to seek legal redress under the terms of the agreement pursuant to what has been said or done over the last five days.

• (1430)

**Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday, the Quebec Minister of the Environment stated that the lack of public hearings on the Rafferty-Alameda dam might create a dangerous precedent. He urged the federal government to take a firm stand. Today, we get the same message from the report *Greenprint for Canada*. The government is accused of dangerous negligence with respect to the environment. My question for the minister is this: How will he respond to the Quebec minister and to all those who tell him the environment comes first?

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, my answer is quite simple. There will be public hearings, as planned, on the Rafferty-Alameda project, and there will be public hearings, as planned, on other projects we shall be dealing with in the months and years to come. Let there be no mistake! And that is exactly what I said in my answer to the first question I was asked today.

**Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard):** That is not the point, Mr. Speaker. The Quebec Minister of the Environment said, and I quote: "That the federal government's record with respect to the Rafferty-Alameda project creates a dangerous precedent that threatens public hearings on the James Bay project." My question is this: Does the minister, as far as James Bay is

concerned, intend to impose a full set of environmental impact studies for both the dam and the infrastructures?

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, I have had two conversations with my Quebec counterpart within the last few days. In fact, it was this week. We are now in the last stages of setting up a commission to review the environmental impact of the James Bay project. We are having a detailed discussion of the terms of reference, which will cover the infrastructures as well as the project itself. There will be public hearings there as there are elsewhere. In fact, the process has been discussed for several months by both levels of government. That was the gist of the understanding I reached with Mr. Paradis this week.

**Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard):** Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about discussions. Will there be public hearings before the work starts? The minister should stop beating around the bush. What is at stake here, Mr. Speaker, is not just Rafferty or James Bay, it is the whole integrity of Bill C-78.

The Quebec Environment Minister has already shown a lot of backbone. The point is this: does the federal minister intend to act likewise? Will he amend Bill C-78 to guarantee compulsory studies before any work whatsoever is started?

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about public hearings for James Bay, the answer is, obviously, yes. When we are talking about legislation and regulations, I would appreciate it if the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard would help smooth the way for discussions on Bill C-78 so that we can finally get the bill to committee where we can have a thorough discussion. Of course we want reviews and public hearings before the project starts, and so I would appreciate the hon. member's co-operation in getting Bill C-78 to committee.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of the Environment. As he knows, the Rafferty-Alameda Dam projects are governed in part by an international agreement. In that international agreement, the Americans agreed to pay for part of those dams.