

*Supply*

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, the three issues raised in the resolution are all very important. Basically, the objectives set out in the resolution seem to be totally compatible with Government action, and we have even gone beyond them.

First, I would like to talk about the issue of environmental assessment. That very important issue is at the center of most Government concerns and our present problems. Over the years this country with its highly developed economy has launched a large number of energy exploration projects and developed an extremely productive agricultural sector. We are one of the largest food producers in the world. We have built a very strong economy, which has created a lot of jobs but which now requires us to take different measures in order to reverse the negative effects of economic growth.

The assessment part of the resolution seems to have been handled very seriously, since we are experiencing a situation that can be changed with basic assessment legislation.

A number of unknown factors are still to be determined in the current debate. For example, I would refer to the Rafferty-Alameda reservoir construction project which has been stopped by federal court order. We often wonder to what extent the federal Government participates in such projects. For example, the Cree are wondering what role the federal Government should play in addition to what it is already doing in connection with the James Bay project. We have megaprojects which were given the green light after being the subject of assessments. However, others are now being assessed. There is not a single economic project in Canada which must not first be the subject of an assessment procedure.

Since 1984, Mr. Speaker, this Government has implemented the directives issued during the last days of the previous administration. The previous Government did not have to follow up on those directives and live with them on a daily basis because the whole thing began before the change in Government, before the 1984 general election. We have had to live with these directives for four years—sometimes in an atmosphere of ambiguity and uncertainty—and the federal court has just issued a ruling to the effect that the directives involve legal restraints and ordered a stop to further work on the Rafferty-Alameda site.

Like everybody else we feel it has become urgent to replace these directives which were issued through an order in council and which can be amended by administrative action on the part of the executive branch. Indeed we believe that the directives must be replaced by an act of Parliament. With this legislation there will be an opportunity for a comprehensive approach under which Canada as a whole, following consultations which have already been completed, and of course for Parliament as well, will be able to set up an assessment system which will meet current environmental needs, clarify situations, identify respective roles and allow for inputs from all interested groups. It is essential that this legislation we have in mind should reconcile environmental concerns with economic development imperatives.

The Government, therefore, is drafting such a legislation. Mr. Speaker, I am committed to tabling next Fall a bill which I am finalizing, a proposal which will be submitted to Cabinet early in the Fall, that we may return to the House with a well-drafted if somewhat complex bill which will open the door to a new area of environmental assessment. That is why we just cannot accept a fixed time frame which would compel us to work in a way which would not be consistent with the interests of the situation. This is not going to be a half-baked, short-sighted kind of thing. We want to set up the foundation of a new assessment environmental process, and our commitment for us to do just can be found in the Speech from the Throne. Of course, I can confirm that my Department is currently drafting a proposal for the Cabinet and that no later than next Fall, we will be in a position to provide Parliament with a legislative instrument of major significance.

[*English*]

The second aspect dealt with by the resolution of the Opposition is about toxic substances. The resolution would like the Government to table within five days of the first sitting day after June 20 the plans for the safe disposal of toxic waste. There is something very strange in this because it looks like nothing has been done on this very important topic. The Opposition should know, and I am sure they do, that we have a law governing the movement of toxic and dangerous goods from the United States to Canada and from Canada to the United States, that this has been doubled by an accord duly signed