

*Government Orders*

I believe you will find unanimous consent to have the following motion put to the House without the usual notice and that it be disposed of without debate.

I move:

That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be modified as follows: Arseneault, Guy; Beaumier, Colleen; Boudria, Don; Catterall, Marlene; Duceppe, Gilles; Frazer, Jack; Langlois, François; Laurin, René; Malhi, Gurbax Singh; McWhinney, Edward; Milliken, Peter; Parrish, Carolyn; Ringma, Bob; Speaker, Ray.

And that the associate members of the said committee be as follows: Bélanger, Mauril; Bellehumeur, Michel; Bertrand, Robert; Brushett, Dianne; Cowling, Marlene; Epp, Ken; Gauthier, Michel; Grey, Deborah; Jordan, Jim; Leroux, Gaston; Pickard, Jerry; Plamondon, Louis; Solomon, John and Williams, John.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### AUDITOR GENERAL ACT

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-83, an act to amend the Auditor General Act be now read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, today with the proposed amendments to the Auditor General Act, I believe the government is making profound changes in the way it does business in order to make sure that its environmental agenda is integrated with Canada's economic agenda.

Today we are also fulfilling a major election commitment of the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party. In the red book we said:

Sustainable development, integrating economic with environmental goals fits in the Liberal tradition of social investment and sound economic policy. Preventive environmental care is the foundation of the Liberal approach to sustainable development.

We also said:

It is past time for the federal government across all departments to act on this understanding by adopting economic and environmental agendas that converge.

Since assuming office we have tried to be guided by this belief. Our approach has been to integrate economic, social, environmental and foreign policies.

I believe we are serious about promoting sustainable development. We are serious about the greening of government. We are serious about getting the federal government's act together on environmental issues. We want to be held accountable for our environmental actions and our environmental planning.

We are serious about these things because Canadians want a healthy country in which we and our children can work to achieve our aspirations.

[Translation]

One vital aspect of our approach is to ensure that the environment and sustainable development form an integral part of the decision-making process in all federal government departments.

We are therefore talking about decisions on new policy, new programs and new regulations or legislation and on existing texts. We are also talking about decisions concerning departmental management of buildings, facilities and operations.

Proposals for amendments to the Auditor General Act now before the House will result in much of the integration we are aiming for. They form a key part of the government's response last fall to the initial report by the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, entitled the "commissioner of environment and sustainable development".

• (1220)

Under the enlightened leadership of the hon. member for Davenport and with the support of all the members, the report gave careful consideration to the government's commitment in the red book to establishing an environmental function equivalent to that of the auditor general. The committee felt that, while it is vital to audit existing government documents, it is even more important to ensure that environmental considerations are a fundamental consideration in all departmental planning.

The committee called for greater environmental auditing of government policies, programs and legislation. It felt that the government must report to Parliament and to the public on the progress it makes in achieving its objectives.

[English]

The committee advocated the idea that the government go beyond simply an environmental auditor and instead establish a commissioner of environment and sustainable development. In these proposed amendments to the Auditor General Act the government will establish a commissioner and I hope meet the objectives of the committee's report.

The amendments do contain one departure from the committee's report and that is to create the commissioner of environment and sustainable development not as a separate position but within the existing framework of the office of the auditor general as recommended in the minority report. This is not in any way to be seen as a retreat from our red book pledge. Indeed I believe it will prove to be an effective way of achieving our promise.

The office of the auditor general has clout. When the auditor general speaks, departments of government listen. It is indepen-