

No matter how we draw our political boundaries, the environment encompasses and transcends those boundaries. The responsibility of the federal government is more than the sum of its parts, the parts being mere historical, political creations. This includes federal ridings, cities, regions and provinces.

The air in my home riding of The Battlefords—Meadow Lake does not heed provincial boundaries. Poisons and toxins, if they are in the air, move from community to community, from province to province. CFCs spewed in the air from other provinces and even other countries impact on radiation levels and climate changes which affect all of us.

Effluents released into the water table and pesticides which are brought into the water table do not honour the provincial boundary, for example, between Saskatchewan and Alberta, which forms much of the western boundary of my riding. The water table was there before the creation of the provinces and will remain, we hope, long after. It is how we choose to act or not act which will determine just how we leave it for future generations. Mammals, birds, fish and plant life pay no heed to these boundaries. Disease and genetic damage impact inter-provincially and internationally.

This environment, these biosystems we borrow from our grandchildren, require the federal government to play a strong role. As Chief Seattle stated in 1893: "Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself".

The motion before us today asks the House to recognize that the Constitution should be amended to recognize the right of every person in Canada to a safe and healthy environment. All Canadians are aware that our environment is suffering irrevocably in many ways. Families know that our children are inheriting a land that is diseased and weak compared to the one we inherited. We have not done a good job as stewards.

Governments continue to turn a blind eye to environmental damage in order to please and placate the efforts of big business to continue to drive down the costs, often made more expensive in the short term by environmental regulation and protection. The Mexican trade deal threatens to push our various levels of government even further in reducing environmental laws in order to

compete with the joke that is Mexican environment enforcement.

Tracts of forests, one-third the size of Japan, are sold to Japanese industry. While our government joins the chorus criticizing the destruction of the Amazon rain forests, it assists the continued destruction of our country's own lungs, our rain forests and our boreal forests. The ozone layer smack dab above our own country has thinned to the extent that the environment minister has urged young children to stay out of the sun. What have we come to? Has the minister also decided that in the future he will urge young plants, animals and fish to protect themselves from the dangerous radiation levels caused through CFC production? Clearly this is a timely motion.

The federal government in its constitutional proposals has at the same time recognized the need to address the environment and put forward proposals which serve to further threaten the environment, belying our trust as stewards for future generations.

The Canadian Council of Ministers on the Environment says Canadians are making unprecedented demands on their government to preserve, protect and repair all aspects of the environment. The council also commissioned a study by Resources Future International, an institute for research on public policy, which found that almost nine in ten Canadians feel that their long-term health already has been affected by pollution levels in their area. Three-quarters of our population feels that pollution is a major cause of cancer. Perhaps most alarmingly, 85 per cent of the population considers pollution problems already serious enough to threaten the very survival of the human race.

In introducing the green plan, the Prime Minister stated: "Canada's natural development has shaped the development of our character and spirit. The challenge we now face is to build upon our economic strength in harmony with our environment, the basis of our health and our prosperity".

The recent decision of the Supreme Court of Canada on the Oldman dam further underscores the federal responsibility in environmental matters. The Supreme Court's decision stresses the federal role and takes a view of the environment which extends to include a community's livelihood, health and other social matters.

Private Members' Business