



*be*

**The Federation of Ontario Naturalists**

1262 Don Mills Road, Don Mills, Ontario. Telephone: (416) 444-8419

Mike M. Singleton

Received April 4, 1974

EIA TEL  
92



# House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 118 • NUMBER 12 • 2nd SESSION • 29th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT

Thursday, March 14, 1974

Speaker: The Honourable Lucien Lamoureux

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
PARLIAMENTS BUILDING  
OTTAWA, ONTARIO  
K1A 0S4  
MAY 15 1974  
45 CHARLES ST E  
SIXTH FLOOR  
TORONTO ONT M5E 1S2

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 14, 1974

The House met at 2 p.m.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

#### ANNOUNCEMENT OF SCREENING OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROJECTS

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, beginning April 1, 1974, federal government projects will be screened to ensure that they do the least possible damage to our natural environment. Most of these projects will be cleared with little comment. Others, because of their likely effect on the quality of life in this country, must be examined very carefully indeed.

Federal departments, crown agencies and private companies with government contracts, grants and loans will have to prepare environmental impact statements. These statements will be screened by a panel of experts in my department. Recommendations for action, that is, for approval, for modification or for denial, will be made to the Minister of the Environment. Final dispositions will, of course, have to be worked out in consultation with other ministers of the Crown.

Essentially, our new environmental assessment and review process is this. The initiator will be responsible for securing, at the earliest possible stage in the planning of a project or other environmentally significant activity, a forecast of likely environmental effects. This statement must use baseline data and procedural guidelines provided by Environment Canada.

If the initiating department, crown agency or private firm has sufficient expertise it will prepare its own environmental impact study. If not, it will have to obtain this advice from outside sources at its own expense. When completed, the statement will be screened by a panel of experts in Environment Canada. Any element or aspect of the plan which the panel finds unacceptable must be noted and referred to the Minister of the Environment before the project proceeds.

Public disclosure is important. Written assessments made by the panel will, therefore, be published. Public participation is also vital. In cases of broad public interest, the Minister of the Environment, in consultation with the minister of the initiating department, may, therefore, appoint an environmental review board, the membership of which may be drawn from outside the Public Service. This review board will be able to hold public hearings and make recommendations which will be published.

More specifically, the initiator of a new project or activity with possible environmental consequences must:

1. Take environmental considerations into account from the outset;
2. Submit their project to a panel in Environment Canada or a public review board before financial or other commitments are made;
3. Incorporate recommendations made during the course of our screening process into the design, construction and operation of the new project or activity; and
4. Prepare to publish, or otherwise make public, their findings and plans in this regard.

In order to meet local needs, regional panels may also be necessary. They will be struck from time to time and in such places as the need for assessing and reviewing the environmental consequences of particular developments dictates.

This environmental assessment and review process will help to round out the resource management and environmental protection programs already under way in my department. It will be implemented in stages. It will also be put into effect in close consultation with the provinces and with industry.

I hope, in the process, that we can avoid the delays and other pitfalls which a strictly legalistic approach would cause in this country. Our approach, I believe, is the right approach. We will not hold up important developments which are clean from an environmental point of view and, in contrast to the situation which has developed in the United States, we will not bring the environmental assessment process into disrepute. We will not be charged with blocking everything. At the same time, we will make a great deal of information public. We will, I believe, deal effectively and efficiently with certain projects which are bound to be controversial because of their impact on our environment. In some instances, as we all know, these effects can be very serious indeed.

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, the other day the minister, in answering questions put to him in the House by my colleague the hon. member for Portage (Mr. Masniuk), said he would be making a statement to clarify government policy on environmental impact today. With respect, Mr. Speaker, if this statement is supposed to be clarification it falls far short of what is needed in this country.

There was a great deal said in the minister's statement about making public the contents of environmental impact studies. But if one looks at the statement of the minister carefully he will find that this policy has been carefully geared to make sure that anything the government does not want the public to know will not be revealed. If you look at the procedure outlined by the minister today you will see it is quite clear that it is not until after a panel of experts of the minister's department have prepared a report based on their consideration of the environmental

*Environmental Screening of Federal Projects*

impact statement put forward by the proponent that anything will be made public. How are we to know whether the government, for its own purposes, will tell us everything that was in the initial statement? It is quite clear that if this is supposed to be an attempt to enlighten the public about considerations that have to go into the decision-making process before a major project with significant environmental impact is undertaken, it comes very close to being a fraud.

● (1410)

The minister is trying to give the impression that the public is going to be involved, but again it is only after an environmental review board is set up, which is permissive, not mandatory, that there may be public hearings. The fundamental difficulty in the policy the government is following is that it is still determined to pursue a process of secretiveness and of holding unto itself anything it does not want the public to find out about. This, of course, is based on the assumption that the government knows best. If the government knows best there is no need for environmental impact statements and there is no need to have public participation in the decision-making process.

Let me point out what the minister said in his statement. These words appear on page 4 of the statement the minister kindly gave me:

I hope, in the process, that we can avoid the delays and other pitfalls which a strictly legalistic approach would cause in this country. Our approach, I believe, is the right approach.

I should like to know what the minister means by "our approach". Does he mean the government's approach or does he mean the approach that was taken by the task force set up some time ago by this same minister to report to the government on the policy that ought to be followed with regard to environmental impact? The report of the task force is dated August 30, 1972, and the first policy position the report sets out is as follows:

The federal government shall offer leadership in the area of environmental impact assessment in respect of significant effects on the environment through the pronouncement and implementation of a policy and procedure to be based ultimately on legislation.

This is the exact thing the minister and the government have rejected. They do not want this to be mandatory; they do not want it set up in legislation. They want to have their own cosy little system of review, which means it does not matter how much in error they may be, or to what extent they are proceeding with something that is their political policy for the moment, the public is not going to get a look at it.

Recommendation no. 7 is as follows:

The policy shall provide for appropriate public information and participation in hearings and in reviews of statements.

How does this policy provide for that? I say again that I am quoting from the report of the task force set up by this minister, which was five months in the making and was highlighted by consultations with environmental experts of the United Kingdom, Holland, the United States, the other provinces of Canada and other federal departments.

I think I can sum up by quoting again from the front page of this report where it is stated:

The task force recognizes that there are alternatives to some proposals in this report.

[Mr. Fraser.]

We have had an alternative today. It goes on to state:

However, consideration of these alternatives may best await the decision on just now strong a stand the federal government takes on environmental impact assessment.

The stand the government has taken on environmental impact assessment is not strong. It is not going to work, it is in defiance of its own report, and is a fraud.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West):** Mr. Speaker, I should first like to thank the minister for making a copy of his statement available to me before the opening of the House today. Our group welcomes this move by the minister to set up an environmental assessment review process as far as it goes. I agree with the last speaker that it certainly does not go far enough. But the mere fact that for the first time we are to have Crown agencies and federal departments go through the process of an environmental review is good. We have been advocating for years that where any project is carried out by the federal authorities, or by other agencies where there is partial federal authority, environmental impact studies should first be made and those studies should then be fully evaluated before any money is allocated for projects or a start made on projects.

An excellent example in this field is in the James Bay area. There have been several in British Columbia. The Columbia River was one and the Peace River Dam another. I could name a number of projects throughout Canada where environmental studies should have been made and evaluated before the project started. It is too late now. Immense damage has been done that can never be corrected regardless of what we do. Federal departments and Crown corporations will now be forced to make these studies. This is good.

But there are several weaknesses in the statement the minister made today. One is the fact that the Crown agency, or private firm given money to do a job for the government, will prepare its own environmental impact study. Whom is the minister trying to kid? All we need do is go into northern Canada where, under the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development we find that certain projects are under way many of them being carried out by the minister's own department or let out by him to other groups, in respect of which we are not getting the protection in the northern part of Canada we should be getting.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Harding:** We have complained over the years about this kind of tactic and have urged that action be taken. I urge upon the minister that the very first department he tackle is the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development insofar as northern Canada is concerned.

For this reason that part of the statement which says that a private company or government department can carry out its own environmental impact study does not mean too much when one realizes that the minister's own department is the one which will assess the good or bad of the impact study. There is one bright spot. There could be some public input for the first time. The mere fact that

statements by the board will have to be made public and that in respect of some of the larger projects public hearings may be held is, I think, credit insofar as the minister is concerned on this point.

In closing I again want to point out that if the environmental impact studies are really to do the job which I think should be done we must get into the field where we can insist on these impact studies being made in those areas where we have only partial jurisdiction. One is in the field of the Navigable Waters Protection Act. Does this House know that a Crown corporation in the name of a province cannot be touched under that act? It can build any dam it wishes and does not have to come to the federal authorities for any license. It does not have to let the minister know what damage might be done behind the dam that is to be built.

● (1420)

I agree with the hon. member who has just spoken. We have to expand impact studies to cover the whole of Canada in order to really do a job for the people of Canada in the future.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Caouette (Charlevoix):** As usual, Mr. Speaker, this statement is a necessary one, but it comes belatedly, which has been the characteristic of the government administration for many years.

When all our rivers are polluted and when only perfunctory legislation has been created and nearly nothing is being done to rectify a persisting situation, the minister tells us that in the future all projects that may interfere with the environment must be approved by his department. The planning must incorporate any corrections or recommendations made by his department and, lastly, all the findings must be published.

In no way does the minister indicate what penalties will be imposed on those who do not obey these regulations and, even less, how they will be forced to do so. Money will once again be spent, not to rectify an existing situation but only to study and recommend a type of action which nearly never was applied in the past.

The House certainly recalls the nice briefs on pollution in the Great Lakes and in the rivers, and water resources of Canada, but they are still polluted. Consider the Ottawa river, for instance, which is certainly not too far away from Parliament to go unnoticed. Pulpwood driving had been forbidden, but last summer tugboats still ran on the river with their shipments of wood. Nothing is being done. Then why make such a statement today when we are powerless to implement previous decisions?

Does the minister simply seek to toss good wishes in the air, or is he really prepared to get down seriously to the job of correcting present problems first?

This statement for the future is appreciated, but I have yet to be convinced of its effectiveness for, as I have said earlier, the minister puts nobody under the obligation of believing his statement, and moreover he sets no time limit for effective implementation.

I must therefore conclude that the minister simply perpetuate a deplorable situation and is absolutely not inter-

*House of Commons Hockey*

ested in correcting the problems we are now facing regarding the environment.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PUBLIC SERVICE**

TABLING OF REPORT BY JACOB FINKELMAN ON EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to table Part I of the report on employer-employee relations in the Public Service of Canada prepared at the request of the government by Mr. Jacob Finkelman, chairman of the Public Service Staff Relations Board. Mr. Finkelman's terms of reference were outlined in the House of Commons on April 17, 1973.

The report is comprised of three parts. Part I of the report, which I am tabling today, is the substantive or main part of the report. Parts II and III will be tabled as soon as they are prepared in final form. Part II is to be a compilation of the recommendations that are set out in Part I and will be, in essence, what might be termed a ready reference document. Part III will be in the form of a draft bill which will simply embody in legislative language those recommendations contained in Part I that deal with the revision of the Public Service Staff Relations Act. The draft bill, of course, like the rest of the report, will be the work of Mr. Finkelman and it should not be regarded as being a government proposal or government bill.

As indicated earlier, it is the government's position that no major amendments will be made to the Public Service Staff Relations Act without a full opportunity being given to the employee representatives to express their views. The employee representatives, of course, will probably appear before the standing committee charged with the consideration of Mr. Finkelman's report. In addition, there shall be full consultation between the government and the employee representatives before the government brings forward any bill making major amendments to the act.

On behalf of the government, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure on behalf of members of the House, I should like to thank Mr. Finkelman for his thorough study of employer-employee relations in the Public Service of Canada. Mr. Finkelman's experience and reputation on this field are evident in the quality of the report he has prepared.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

HOCKEY GAME BETWEEN MEMBERS AND PRESS GALLERY—  
REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION

**Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette):** Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 43, I ask the unanimous consent of the House to introduce a motion.

Considering that it was vital for the honour of this House to avoid defeat in last night's hockey game between