

Supply

We must say that the way in which we have handled waste management and sewage treatment has compounded our problems. Therefore, when it comes to municipal infrastructure, regardless of the government, the federal government, which obviously has the resources, along with the provincial and municipal governments, should form a team. We should not say that the provincial government will have precedence over the federal government or vice versa. It is a joint effort, and it is extremely important. I am sure that Canadians from coast to coast are concerned about it.

I do not think it is a surprise to say that the environment and the infrastructure go hand in hand.

We have seen this neglect over the years. We are coming to the point where we are going to have to reconsider how we have handled the whole situation of municipal infrastructure.

It can be said that, if it gets to this point of deterioration, then it practically comes under peace, order, and good government. It is such an essential element for all our municipalities and towns that we cannot let it become the whim of political parties. They cannot say, on the eve of elections, that they are going to invest x number of billions of dollars.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, I remember the early 1970s when I had the pleasure to represent the riding of Papineau in the National Assembly. It was a time of great prosperity. We had funds at our disposal. I remember that they were good years in that regard and we ended each year without a deficit, even for current expenditures. At that time, we invested in municipal infrastructure, but maybe not enough. I remember the sewers, viaducts, aqueducts and so on. If a good part of this country's deficit had been for our municipal infrastructure, it would be much easier for us to take.

There has been neglect and we have come to a point where it is essential for all levels of government to join together. We must look into this issue because, as I said, it affects the very structure of our society. It is extremely important for it to be an ongoing process of making sure that municipal infrastructure throughout Canada will never again be neglected. Every municipality must have a continuing stock of municipal infrastructure not only for the security of our fellow citizens but for a healthy

environment, which definitely affects our human behaviour.

There is nothing magic about that, except that it is always a matter of having the necessary political will. People expect us to take such initiatives. It will obviously be very expensive but there are choices to be made and this one is a priority in a modern society like ours which needs the technology.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I hope this motion will encourage every political party in this House to develop a policy on the municipal infrastructure issue, not to buy votes but to assess with objectivity the situation across the country and make a commitment not to let it deteriorate as it has done in the past 20 years.

[*English*]

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Madam Speaker, I listened to my Liberal colleague and I think that a lot of his arguments are most pertinent.

I think he would agree with my comments that, in large measure, the government has been preoccupied with the big ticket items that have been facing the country: free trade; the GST; and, now, trying to put spit and polish on its Constitution, wringing its hands over the situation with the Meech Lake Accord. Meanwhile, while we are looking at these big ticket items, it is the nuts and bolts that have continued to rust, the very problems that face our many municipalities in Canada. I think the member would also agree that the government has been pleading poverty, faced with a terrible, burdensome debt.

Yet, the member knows as well as any member in the House that during the last election this same government promised the taxpayers of Canada some \$20 billion in election goodies. That is what the price-tag was, \$20 billion. Read my lips.

After the election, we are suddenly faced with a terrible debt. But during the election, the Minister of Finance never even recognized that there was a debt problem.

I want to ask the member—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, the hon. member will not have time to ask his question and the hon. member will not have time to answer the question.