

Adjournment Debate

When I said millions of Canadians would be affected, I was not exaggerating. Back in 1976, it was estimated that there were at least 2.5 million Canadians who owned firearms. Today that number would be at least three million. Over one million Canadians have had to get firearms acquisition certificates since 1979 in order to acquire firearms. That means that over two million Canadians—and it could be many more—would have to obtain a firearms possession certificate if Bill C-205 were to be enacted. I am concerned about the possible cost and major inconvenience that this measure would cause.

There are serious implications for all of those affected by Bill C-205 and I will address them now in the House. But first I would like to refer to a first-hand expression of the concerns of many affected citizens. It is a letter which was written to the previous Government protesting a previous Private Members' Bill, Bill C-451, which was put forward by the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East (Mr. Allmand). It was identical in content to this present Bill C-205. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we have run out of time. I would like to thank you for the privilege of speaking for a few moments.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. The hour provided for Private Members' Business is now over.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 46 deemed to have been moved.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS—NIAGARA RIVER POLLUTION— AMERICAN CHEMICAL WASTE DUMPS

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Mr. Speaker, back on October 17, the Minister of Environment (Mr. McMillan) met with Mr. Lee Thomas, the Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, in connection with the cleaning up of the chemical dumps on the American side of the Niagara River. As you are aware, there are four chemical dumps of great concern in that area: the Love Canal, Hyde Park, the S Dump, and 102nd Street in Niagara Falls, New York. All of those chemical waste dumps are owned or controlled by the Hooker Chemical Company or the Occidental Petroleum Company in the U.S. They were created over a period of years with the accumulation of waste and toxic material originally in great pools or surface dumps which have now seeped into the ground and are causing potential danger to the water of the Niagara River and Lake Ontario.

• (1830)

It has been evident over the last few years, when we see the glistening of the moisture on the rocks on the banks of the Niagara River, that seepage is taking place. Traces of toxic materials, including dioxin, have been found in the waters of the Niagara River and Lake Ontario.

Because of the complaints about the Love Canal and these other chemical dumps the American have been making some efforts to investigate the possible cleanup of these sites. However, all their efforts so far have been aimed at the containment of the dumps, leaving them where they are and containing the materials in a better way. This has caused a great deal of concern on the part of Canadians generally, and environmentalists in particular, because there is the real possibility that the toxic material will move towards the banks and then burst those banks on the Niagara River. This would make completely unusable the drinking water of over six million people. About four million of those people are in the Province of Ontario, two million in the City of Montreal, and about 200,000 in the U.S. Therein lies the problem.

The fact is that these dumps are on the American side of the Niagara River, but the problems caused if the toxic materials burst the banks of the river, will really be felt in large part by Canadians. Somehow or other we have to come to grips with this problem. The Americans have not just been sitting idly by. They have looked at this problem and have done something. Five years ago they created what they called the "Super Fund" to try and deal with hazardous industrial dumps and solve these problems. They put a great deal of money into this "Super Fund". However, they have an awfully large number of waste dumps all over the U.S. In fact, most of them are concentrated in the States of California and New Jersey. That is where large numbers of people are located, as opposed to the Niagara frontier and Lake Ontario. Therefore, it is those areas which have been getting most of the attention. As I understand it, the legislation creating this "Super Fund" has expired and has not yet been replaced. There is no funding at all at the moment.

If we are going to deal with this problem the only effective way is not just to contain it but dig it up and destroy it, which is a very expensive process and there has been a lot of discussion as to whether it can be done in fact. However, it is being done in Europe, in the Netherlands and West Germany. They have plants in which they destroy this toxic material. That is what we should be doing in North America.

It has not only been these dumps along the American side of the Niagara River which caused this problem. There are other sources. Other industries, other hazardous dump sites, as well as municipalities, are causing pollution of the Niagara River and the Great Lakes generally. We have to do something about that.

• (1835)

It seems to me there are three things we can do. First, we can press the United States to get on with cleaning up their act. Second, we should be funding our own environmental