

Ontario-Niagara River basin is increasing rather than decreasing. The Minister's own departmental officials say that more is escaping now than was anticipated. Dr. Becking of the Department of National Health and Welfare stated, "Canadian water treatment plants are not equipped to remove toxic chemicals from drinking water". Some of those toxic chemicals are deadly.

• (1450)

My question, and that of the four million Canadians who are using this as a source of water supply is: has the time not yet come for an emergency summit meeting and the establishment of an international task force, rather than leaving it to the Province of Ontario to fight the battles of this international waterway?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member is mistaken if he thinks we are simply leaving this question to the Province of Ontario. This is a matter of very grave concern to us, although the information I received from my officials is that there is no danger to water supply in the situation.

We have raised this matter on a variety of occasions, as the Hon. Member knows. I think there are court actions under way. We have been of great assistance to those who wish to intervene in the court cases to present their concerns. We are undertaking extensive studies and making great efforts in conjunction with the Department of National Health and Welfare to monitor and assess the situation. It is a matter of very great concern to us and we are pursuing every possible method in our attempt to ensure that the situation is properly assessed and remedied.

REPRESENTATIONS MADE TO UNITED STATES AUTHORITIES

Mr. Joe Reid (St. Catharines): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. We know that what the departmental officials have done has been helpful, but it has had little impact. I would ask the Minister, is it not better to stop those chemicals from reaching the water supply we are now discussing? The Minister's officials know there has been a contamination of the bedrock structure along the Niagara River. He also knows that, since 1978, the faulty Niagara Falls, New York, system has been discharging contaminated water, raw sewage containing chemicals, into the Niagara River. Since the Minister has been saying that the federal Government is taking some action, will he table the representations which have been made in writing by either himself or the Department of External Affairs? If nothing more can be done, then what is the purpose and the effect of the 1978 Great Lakes Water Quality Treatment Agreement?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member is correct. We would very much like to have those contaminated wastes removed by digging them up and having them destroyed. However, they are within the jurisdiction of the Government of the United States, as he

has indicated. Therefore, we have been making continual representations of the most vigorous sort to have that situation remedied in the direction which he has described.

The Hon. Member has also raised a question involving the Niagara Falls sewage treatment plant, and our extremely vigorous representations have been very effective in leading the U.S. administration to unfreeze funds to be directed toward placing the Niagara Falls, New York, sewage treatment plant into a proper remedial state. There has been action flowing as a result of the kinds of representations we have made to the American authorities.

I would be quite happy to make available to the Hon. Member all the representations that I can. It may very well be a case that, in terms of the diplomatic exchanges between our two governments on this matter, those are matters of a confidential nature which cannot be treated in the way which he has described. However, it is certainly my interest to ensure that he is as aware as I hope Hon. Members are generally of the very strong representations that we have made in the past and will continue to make to American authorities with regard to this matter.

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FINANCE

ENERGY TAXES PAID BY FARMERS

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. The Minister will know that net farm income is projected to be down 15 per cent in 1982 and that farm bankruptcies are up by 65 per cent this year. Since the Liberal Government took office in 1980, farmers have been required to pay \$300 million in additional revenue to the federal Government due to increased energy taxes, particularly on gas and diesel fuels. Is the Minister aware of the impact of these additional charges? Is he aware that the Minister of Agriculture made an election promise of an energy tax rebate and, if so, what is he prepared to do about it?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am aware of the impact of energy price increases, not only on farmers but on all Canadian citizens. I would remind the Hon. Member, who I know is aware of the situation, that the price we are paying for oil in Canada is cheaper than in any other industrialized country in the world. We had to adjust gradually to higher prices, in order to get closer to the world price. My hon. colleague will recall that his own party wanted to impose the full world price on farmers. Thanks to the agreement we were able to negotiate with the Province of Alberta, we are now paying only 75 per cent of the world price for oil discovered before 1981. So the present price of oil provides protection for all consumers, including farmers.