

Oral Questions

third, one-third, one-third split of all infrastructure costs, including anti-pollution costs for our cities and towns. We are on record firmly for that, and my question really addresses why Halifax when there was a provincial election, why Lac-Saint-Jean when there was a by-election? Why not Vancouver, why not Windsor, why not Winnipeg, why not Victoria, why not Laval?

Does it take a provincial election? Does it take a political event to sponsor this kind of intervention? Why is every city in this country not entitled to help in cleaning up pollution?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, clearly it takes a pending federal election to instil in the bosom of the Leader of the Opposition an interest in environmental matters.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMillan: I have been Minister of the Environment for three years. This is the first question I have ever had from the Leader of the Opposition on pollution.

Ms. Copp: Nonsense.

Mr. Axworthy: That's because you're never here.

Mr. McMillan: He was not asking about the Halifax Harbour or the St. Lawrence River two or three years ago.

In his first question he referred to the St. Lawrence River clean-up, wrongly, I might add, as a sewage treatment program. It has nothing to do with sewage treatment. It has everything to do with stemming the flow of industrial wastes from point sources in an international waterway for which we have international jurisdiction under the Constitution.

RADON GAS—NON-INCLUSION IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we have been on record since 1986 at a convention in Hamilton of the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities supporting this program to clean up our cities across the country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): The blow-dried Minister is not demonstrating much response in dealing with this particular issue.

Since we are not getting serious answers on pollution, let me turn to another subject.

● (1425)

Yesterday the United States announced that most homes in that country should be tested for radon gas, the second leading cause of lung cancer. Will the Prime Minister explain why he refused to allow radon and other radioactive substances to be covered under the Environmental Protection Act despite

requests from government experts to do just that? As well, does the Government now intend to reassess that policy on radon in light of the very disturbing announcement by environmental authorities in the U.S. yesterday?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I would much prefer to be blow-dried than a blow-hard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMillan: Mr. Speaker, I caused to have appointed a very distinguished environmentalist, an academic and scientist, who was asked to head a blue-ribbon panel to advise the Government of Canada on all substances that, in the panel's judgment, should be scheduled and regulated under the Environmental Protection Act. The Minister does not unilaterally pick this chemical or that substance for that purpose. I rely on the advice of scientists, in this case a very important panel that was established for the purpose. If in their judgment the relevant substance should be scheduled and regulated under the Act, I will view their advice very seriously and with favour.

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HEALTH

PRESENCE OF RADON GAS IN WINNIPEG HOMES

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a supplementary question on the same subject to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

In releasing a report yesterday, the U.S. Surgeon General indicated that the highest levels of radon were found in the States of Minnesota and North Dakota. He went on to say the same conditions would prevail in those parts of Canada just north of those states, particularly in Manitoba, in the Red River Valley and the city of Winnipeg. He went on to suggest that it might be wise for us to undertake comprehensive testing of all homes in that area.

I ask the Minister why it is that since 1986 we have known that 40 per cent of the homes in Winnipeg have been way above even the highest levels reported in the U.S. study, yet we have undertaken no public education, no comprehensive testing, and no establishing of national standards to deal with a serious health problem, not just for the residents of Winnipeg but for the entire country?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member is referring to the report from the Environmental Protection Agency respecting radon gas, and the report released in the U.S. yesterday. I take those reports seriously and I would indicate to him that I have further checked with departmental officials today to further establish the regulations that would be needed respecting