

water quality in the Great Lakes, the quality of our water supplies, floods, preparation of replies to reports by the International Joint Commission and finally, the co-ordination of federal activities with respect to the Mackenzie Basin.

In addition to the work of these sub-committees, I would like to mention several problems or matters of interest that were brought to the attention of the Interdepartmental Committee last year, including the Commission of inquiry on federal policy on water; a draft policy by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on the management of fish habitat; the Qu'Appelle water supply project; a water purification plant for the cities of Regina and Moose Jaw; the Fraser estuary management plan; the Canadian heritage waterways network; water and soil conservation in Western Canada; a study of mercury in the Wabigoon-English River system; exports of water by tanker ship; special projects in Ontario; a Bill concerning drinking water proposed by Health and Welfare Canada. Mr. Speaker, through this committee, other departments with an interest in water issues will be asked to work together with Health and Welfare Canada on drafting the legislation on the quality of drinking water to which I referred earlier.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to draw your attention to the inquiry on the federal Government's policy on water. The Commission on Inquiry is now winding up its last round of public hearings which started on September 18 in Halifax. In the course of these hearings, committee members have met with over 200 Canadian citizens and representatives of agencies to discuss federal water policy and hear briefs on the subject. The committee is responsible for identifying and describing present water problems, including drinking water, and for identifying the ramification for the provincial, federal and international jurisdictions concerned. The Committee's final report will be forwarded on July 31, 1985. There is no doubt that the recommendations on the quality of drinking water will make up an important part of it. All through this study the consultation process is viewed in such a way as to include a large number of water issues that will have some bearing on the global question of how to provide Canadians with drinking water of a very high quality.

I bring this to your attention, Mr. Speaker, because in my view it is premature at this point to discuss legislation on the quality of drinking water in Canada within the framework of a Private Members' Bill. I am convinced that my colleague, the Hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), will make good use of Bill C-212 and the results of the Pearse Committee investigation when preparing recommendations on the quality of drinking water.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to raise other issues. My Department is chairing the Interdepartmental Committee on Toxic Chemicals. It is the potential presence of toxic chemicals in drinking water that is the greatest single threat to human health. The IDCTC is current-

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ly preparing a number of plans for dealing with the major issues relating to those chemicals. It is important to prepare a plan to deal with good quality drinking water and to provide for the coordination and effectiveness of federal action in that area.

The traditional role of the provinces and the municipalities in areas such as the construction, operation and maintenance of water purification plants and affluent treatment stations, as well as in the establishment of standards concerning drinking water quality are of prime importance for supplying Canadians with good quality drinking water.

In drafting a drinking water quality legislation, it is important to allow enough time for the Canadian Government and provinces to thoroughly review the question, because such consultation is essential to the preparation of any federal legislation in that area.

Questions pertaining to drinking water supplies and quality have constantly been included in the priorities of the Health Ministers' Conference and the Advisory Committee on Hygiene and Work Environment. Task forces responsible to the Advisory Committee, with representatives from the Canadian Government and the Provinces, have drafted recommendations on the quality of drinking water in Canada that are currently under review. Toxic chemicals are being discussed more closely in the latest edition of those recommendations. The recommendations deal with maximum concentration of substances that can influence the quality of drinking water and water used for other domestic purposes.

My Department is co-operating in the drafting of those recommendations by giving expert advice on matters pertaining to environment, the seepage of contaminants and the end use of chemicals that can affect drinking water. The implementation of those recommendations is not mandatory. However, they are finding their way into drinking water requirements established by the various agencies.

Water quality objectives provide not only a standard to determine whether water quality is acceptable, but also a means to ensure effective management of water quality by specifying limits to protect certain uses, including the supply of drinking water.

Similar objectives have been set under the Canada-United-States Agreement concerning the quality of the water in the Great Lakes and for the purpose of other joint agreements. At the meeting of the Canadian Resource and Environment Ministers Council held in 1984, the participants decided to standardize all across Canada the water quality guidelines. Those guidelines provide the basic scientific information used in the establishment of quality goals for specific areas.

The Canadian Government will assume that responsibility, in co-operation with the Provinces, by publishing surface water guidelines. The latter will deal with a number of water uses,