

Government of Canada has and is spending hundreds of millions of dollars specifically in this area.

I told you, Madam Speaker, that the \$4 million that went into the secondary water pollution control plant in Niagara Falls was for clean water. This is to help in the area. The millions of dollars that we are spending in the Great Lakes is for clean water. The money that is being spent in Halifax is for clean water. We are doing those things. We have done them in the past.

We are even trying to pay for the ones that were done before 1984, the ones that were all on the credit card. We will pay for those and we will pay for the ones that we are doing at the present time, as well as those we will do in the future.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. member. The time for questions and comments has now expired.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Madam Speaker, the opposition motion now under consideration reads as follows:

That this House call upon the government to recognize that Canada's municipal infrastructure is facing a crisis of national proportions and that, given the serious implications to the nation's environment, economic prosperity and quality of life for Canadians, the government resume its traditional role as a partner with the provincial and municipal governments to address this national crisis.

I would suggest that any Canadian familiar with the municipal infrastructure issue will agree with this motion.

First, Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate two of my colleagues who created and worked with this task force, the hon. member for Nepean (Mrs. Gaffney) and the hon. member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Harb).

• (1450)

Naturally each of us in his or her respective region was glad to co-operate and work with municipal councils to examine infrastructures, budgets, and improvements to be undertaken. The mayors and municipal councillors in my riding of Gatineau—La Lièvre were invited to attend and, much to my surprise, the most pressing issue was the funding required to make improvements or, at the very least, upgrade of the municipal infrastructure to acceptable levels. This makes you think, of course. But

Supply

when we consider the amounts required for one Canadian region alone it soon becomes patently clear that there has been a lot of negligence over the years, no matter which government was in office at the time. It is so obvious that I had to reflect upon the matter.

Four or five years ago, as I was reading letters to the editor in the well-known *New York Times*, I spotted an article by a professor of the highly respected Columbia University who had made an exhaustive study throughout the United States—their situation can be compared to ours, I would think—and concluded that the American municipal infrastructure situation was alarming. Not worrisome, alarming! Roadways, bridges and municipal infrastructures generally were in an unbelievable state of disrepair, and this was four or five years ago. They say the bill to upgrade infrastructures would amount to something like \$500 billion, if you can imagine! This gives you an idea of what needs to be done to bring municipal infrastructures up to more satisfactory levels. Nor can we ignore the fact that there has been negligence.

I remember that spokesmen for the Union des municipalités du Québec came to Ottawa to meet members of the various caucuses. The former mayor of Quebec City was there, as were representatives of the City of Montreal, Sherbrooke and other localities. They gave us a rundown on the situation in their respective municipalities, and indeed there is cause for great concern. From all this we can only conclude that the municipal infrastructure upgrading process is a major undertaking.

[*English*]

I just want to bring out one point. This should be an ongoing operation. Programs should not arrive on the eve of an election. It should be an ongoing process.

I am convinced, when the whole infrastructure deteriorates to the point it is getting to now, that it even has adverse effects on the fabric of our society. I do not think that is an exaggeration. It is a fact.

It is remarkable to think that a country such as Canada has 25 per cent of all the fresh water in the world and the Province of Quebec has 15 per cent of all the fresh water in the world. Yet we are beginning to see problems concerning the supply of fresh water. Can one imagine what is going on in the rest of the world? How did we get to this point?