

cannot get the money to do. This would have an effect on the over-all ecology of our country and would improve the management of our wildlife.

I should not have to remind the House, but some may have forgotten, that our fur industry, which started this country, is still a very important industry. It is considered a sideline perhaps more than it should be. Approximately \$900 million worth of furs are taken by trappers and farmers and they provide a sizeable addition to the income of people who live in forested areas. There is, as well, the management of our water resources in order to assist in the growth of migratory wet-land birds. That should be part of the authority as well, because it contributes markedly not only by way of meat for native hunters, but it is also a very large draw to the tourist industry and it can be one of the larger industries in the more remote parts of our country.

I think the idea is a good one and its scope could be extended beyond the very broad terms of reference that the Hon. Member has presented to us. I would be quite pleased to see this idea go to committee for further study, and our Party will support it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fernand Jourdenais (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, in the report prepared by the Senate entitled "Soil at Risk", the authors described the state of agricultural soil across Canada. They point out that soil degradation is a serious problem throughout the country. Although there are some similarities, there are enough differences from region to region to require specific corrective action.

Soil management must deal with the problems of erosion and compaction caused by potato farming in the Maritimes, with floods and erosion by water in Quebec and Ontario, with salinization and erosion by water and wind in the Prairies and water erosion and river sedimentation in British Columbia. Widely differing problems require as many different solutions.

The time has come for the Government of Canada to review its activities with respect to soil, forests, waterways and wet lands, and the preservation of our rural heritage. It is clear that the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties mark the beginning of an era when developing the land and nothing more will no longer be acceptable. We will have to manage the resources we have to ensure our economic and general well-being.

● (1750)

Our water resources are unevenly distributed among the various regions. Ontario and Quebec often suffer from problems caused by spring floods or torrential rains. Soil erosion is one of the most serious problems, and the increase in row crops such as corn makes a serious situation even worse. In some areas, it costs between \$100 and \$600 per hectare to correct these conditions.

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Another example, and I am still referring to central Canada, is that wind erosion is getting worse on sandy soil because of a movement away from cover crops to single crop culture.

And what about soil compaction as a result of repeated plowing in wet soil? This could be just as damaging as flooding and erosion, depending on the area.

Urban expansion in Ontario has meant that agriculture is losing its best arable land. The same phenomenon exists, to a lesser degree, in the Maritimes. In Quebec, strict zoning laws applied since the end of the seventies have helped stop excessive urban expansion, but good farmland remains a rare and high-priced commodity. In the Prairies, water is a particularly unreliable resource, and it has always been difficult to remedy this problem.

Canada's economic development depends on control and effective use of our water resources. Increased use puts greater pressure on our water supply and increases the probability of pollution. Only through effective management and use can we ensure long term availability of our water supply.

When we travel across this country of ours, we can see the incredible diversity of our forests and how they contribute to the well-being of local communities: woodlots and maple bush in the East, the pulp and paper industry in Quebec and Northern Ontario, and British Columbia's vast forest resources. Over the years, we have developed forest resources across this country. Our forests must provide sustained production if we want them to continue to contribute to our prosperity and wellbeing. We should develop and implement a new technology aimed at encouraging conservation, developing reforestation and promoting a more effective management.

Wetlands also play a major role. Compared with the economic roles of our agriculture and forests, that of wetlands is more germane to our environment, way of life, culture and heritage. These areas contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of water quality, the preservation of wildlife habitat, as well as the development of tourism through outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing and nature interpretation centres. They attract those who are eager to educate themselves and contribute to the ecological diversity of our landscapes. They play a part in flood control by holding back the water in times of heavy rainfalls and allowing it to flow during the following months. And they are the depositories of a great many renewable resources such as fur animals and wild rice.

Many wetlands have been drained or greatly modified through the development of up-stream basins. Canadians are becoming increasingly more aware of the extensive damage resulting from the interference with the ecosystems within wetlands. These must be preserved, given the part they play in the use of lands.

Soils, forests, water, humid zones and people are all part and parcel of our rural heritage. The agricultural community