

The Address

continue to consume energy and resources as frenetically as we have been doing in North America for the past fifty years.

If we still want to be taken seriously at the international level as sustainable development champions, we must set the example here, in this country, as a society that integrates its environmental concerns and objectives with its government objectives and methods. I am delighted about all the measures our government intends to take to integrate environmental concerns within a sound management process for our country.

• (1835)

During the last two years, I had the privilege of working very closely with the Algonquins from Barrière Lake on a three-party agreement concerning an integrated resource management project in La Verendrye Park. This dynamic initiative, the first of its kind in Canada, not only reinforced my environmental beliefs, but proved once again that it is possible to reconcile the protection of our ecosystems with our ways of thinking and doing things. May I say how much we could learn on this issue from our First Nations.

[English]

The respect and love the Algonquins of Barrière Lake and certain other First Nations show for mother earth is a touching lesson for us all. It is one I find especially moving and inspiring.

[Translation]

Among the most precious resources for which we are responsible are the largest water reserves in the world. The renowned Canadian scientist Joseph MacInnis told me the other day that, during a recent conversation, the distinguished chairman of *National Geographic*, Gilbert Grosvenor, let him know that water would be the first and foremost priority of his internationally acclaimed publication during the 21st century.

[English]

We are blessed with the enjoyment of the greatest freshwater system in the universe: the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin. It constitutes 80 per cent of the total freshwater reserves in North America and 20 per cent of the world's reserves.

Water is a goal of our new age, of the 21st century and beyond. To provide an idea of the magnitude of our dependence on the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence water, we draw from the ecosystem each day, on both sides of the border, 655 billion gallons of water. That is equivalent to 2.5 trillion litres. If we were to store this water in jumbo tank cars, it would be equivalent to 19 million tank cars of 34,000 gallons each. These tank cars, if tied together, would stretch over 237,000 miles. That is the equivalent of 9.5 times the circumference of the world at the equator.

I have heard it suggested in scientific and environmental circles that the Great Lakes basin may become the population magnet of the 21st century. With the west and southwest of the continent drying up, with the groundwater table close to exhaustion in certain areas, a large migration of people northward toward the essential and crucial resource that is water is a distinct possibility for the future.

Needless to say, we will have to do better in our stewardship of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence if we are to accommodate the large numbers of fellow citizens who may choose in future to take advantage of this unmatched resource.

We will have to do considerably better than today. The record shows that in 1990 we were dumping into the Great Lakes seven million gallons of oil, 80,000 pounds of lead, not to mention 1,900 pounds of PCBs and 1,000 pounds of mercury.

We must strive to build this new sustainable society around a clean industry strategy which would include a binational clean strategy for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin where the bulk of our population lives and works.

• (1840)

[Translation]

I cannot help but wonder how Joliette, Marquette and de la Salle would feel if they saw some of us renounce the great legacy of wide-open spaces that they left us. I hope that during the present term we will find a way to convince the Bloc Québécois members and their followers that this great Canadian legacy which we built together is made up of too many common values and is the result of too many common efforts to be forsaken so lightly.

[English]

I close my first address to this House in praying that Canada and Canadian unity shall prevail and that it shall flourish into the 21st century and beyond and that our great traditions and values of democracy, peace and freedom will continue to mark our lives together.

Long live Canada. May Quebec and its immensely proud and rich heritage and contribution be always a vibrant and crucial part of it.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

M. René Laurin (Joliette): Madam Speaker, I am proud to be given the opportunity to comment on the remarks made by the hon. member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis, and to correct a few historical facts.