

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Madam Speaker, I raised the matter of tire recycling in this House last week, referring, of course, to the fire in Saint-Amable and to the one in Hagersville a few weeks ago. They have been environmental disasters.

The problem is, Madam Speaker, that we know the danger they represent, but we do not know what to do with used tires. The technology exists however to recycle them or to burn them.

I had suggested that option in my supplementary to the Minister responsible. I have since been able to obtain more information.

On February 16, 1990, the Minister of the Environment told the House that Environment Canada had developed a program to establish and develop a recycling and energy conservation process that was going to be funded at the cost of \$2 million.

According to figures I obtained from a departmental official, from \$500,000 to \$800,000 has been spent to date. But we must tell hon. members and Canadians that this program came into being 10 years ago, in 1980, under a previous government. It decided there was to be a program to investigate the possibility of recycling or burning used tires which, as we know, are piling up in many places across the country. The best known, of course, are Saint-Amable and Hagersville.

Madam Speaker, the purpose of this program established by the previous government was to help stimulate research into tire recycling. It was for projects to use tires in manufacturing and not to burn them right away to produce energy. The provinces have never licensed a company to burn tires. In 1983, the province of Ontario refused Canada Cement Lafarge a licence to burn tires, on the grounds that it was hazardous for the environment. But at the present time, with the little research I have done, we have a company in California.

[English]

It is the world's largest tire fired power station. It has been running successfully for the past two years, next to the world's biggest used tire dump in Modesto, California.

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The plant burns 4.5 million tires a year and generates 15 megawatts of electricity, enough to meet the needs of 14,000 homes. Useful steel, zinc and gypsum are extracted from the ash.

Oxford Energy, the plant owner and operator, is building a second tire burning power station in Sterling, Connecticut with an input of 10 million tires a year and an electrical output of 30 megawatts. The company plans to build six to eight similar plants in the United States by 1995.

We have in Canada in the last years spent amounts of money and have one of the greatest research facilities at our disposal, the National Research Council. The technology exists to the south of us. That is the question I was aiming at last week. After the disaster at Hagersville how come we have not simply gone to see this technology that exists? Why do we not look it over, see what the environmental problems are, if any, and apply it here? We would save ourselves a lot of grief like we had in St-Amable and Hagersville.

I would like to know from the Department of the Environment what we are waiting for. Why not purchase this technology if we have to? God knows we could have saved ourselves a lot of money when we consider the disasters of St-Amable and Hagersville.

[Translation]

Madam Speaker, that is basically all there is to it. What will Environment Canada do in the wake of these two disasters? Did it check out this new technology? If not, what is it waiting for? Did it call on the internationally famous National Research Centre, which has succeeded in solving a lot of problems? If they have found other solutions, we would like to hear them.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, I apologize to my hon. friend for my late arrival. I was anticipating this debate to commence at seven o'clock, so he caught me slightly off guard.

There are two or three points I would like to make in response to my hon. friend's questions and comments. First of all, I would certainly like to express my appreciation to the government of Quebec for the manner in