

Oral Questions

I would like to quote a few environmentalists on the green plan. I would like to start with Mrs. Janine Ferretti, Executive Director of Pollution Probe in Toronto, who says: "The green plan is a worth-while effort moving Canadian society in a more environmentally responsible direction. All in all, we are further ahead today than yesterday."

Mr. Fontana: How much?

Mr. de Cotret: Quite a bit.

My hon. colleagues opposite should read the green plan and acquaint themselves with the 120 specific recommendations that we made.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, last night on national television, the minister said that he was going to sign a Great Lakes program with the United States before Christmas but gave no further information.

Will this plan include funding from the federal government for cities along the Great Lakes, like Windsor, Ontario, to upgrade their sewage and water facilities? Doesn't the minister realize that if this program does not include such funding, the program will be nothing more than an empty shell, no better than his already discredited green plan, or should I say again green scam?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I did say that we were getting very close to an agreement with the U.S. on cleaning up the Great Lakes. It is a very important project.

One has to understand that when we talk about the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence River and the tributaries to both, we are talking about a whole ecosystem. We want to clean that up. We have been negotiating with the U.S. At our insistence, as was the case following our Prime Minister's insistence on an acid rain agreement, we are very close to reaching it. I firmly believe that agreement can be signed before Christmas.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the minister very carefully avoided answering my direct question as to whether that plan will contain funding to help cities along the Great Lakes to upgrade their sewage and water facilities. I think people will note the specific absence of a direct answer.

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

Again I have a question for the minister concerning his green plan. Experts have been saying that the minister's green plan should be referred to as the "vague plan" or the "empty plan". In his green plan, why is there no specific date as to when these new goals will be implemented? Why no specific information?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about a green plan involving an injection of \$3 billion in new federal funds, when we are talking about a green plan whose eight chapters contain 120 new recommendations designed to come to grips with our environmental problems—remember that for years on end the previous government contributed to the problem rather than to the solution—I would suggest that such a plan would indeed rally the enthusiastic support of all Canadians. That is the plan which Canadians have asked for when we consulted them. The plan meets our environmental requirements for the next five years, it will still be in force long after that, and it provides us with the assurance that a clean and safe environment will be our legacy to our children and grandchildren.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Just a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, I was in a meeting with the major environment groups that came here to fade some of the green off this plan. These people were very specific, as my notes indicate: no implementation program, no precise timetable, no funds committed. It is already being described as a public relations document. The minister will disagree, of course, but the proof rests with him.

We are two weeks away from the beginning of 1991. If the minister is ready to make his move, would he tell us just what he has in mind for next year? And my question is this, Mr. Speaker: Is the minister now in a position to table a definite and specific plan of action for 1991 to prove that he is serious, to show us that he knows what he wants to do?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I did have the impression that my colleague had read the document I tabled yesterday. There is no need for me to table another one today. The detailed timetable for 1991 is in the document. The timetable for 1992 is in the document. The timetable for 1993—and