

Private Members' Business

Every time work is to be done on a sewage treatment plant or on water facilities, it is necessary to go to the source of the problem and that is the sewage system itself. When you have water run-off and raw sewage, you have to separate the systems so they will be easier to deal with at the end of the day. That particular project will cost in excess of \$1 billion at both the regional and municipal levels.

The reason I bring those issues to your attention, Mr. Speaker, is that day after day our municipalities are faced with tremendous pressure to provide services that otherwise should be provided by the provincial or federal government. To that extent, when we consider water purification, the need for water purification plants and the need for federal funding for water purification plants across our country, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier knows full well that water if not properly treated is going to affect the health of the nation.

Knowing full well that health is everybody's business, federally, provincially, as well as municipally, it is only fair for the federal government to recognize its role and responsibility to provide services in the area.

Having heard the eloquent presentation of my colleagues in the House of Commons, it seems there is a tremendous consensus on this issue.

• (1950)

In conclusion I would like to ask this House for its unanimous approval of the motion as presented by my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier and I would like to commend him on his excellent work in the area.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I would say that the motion the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier has put before this House today is very well-intentioned. He wants Canadians to have access to good quality drinking water supplies. I think that no one can object to such a wish, as formulated by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

However, what I am somewhat more reluctant about, especially after the speech he made, is his approach. He wants the federal government, as heavily in debt as it is—everybody knows that Canada's national debt of Canada, the federal debt has now reached \$400 billion—

to take a whip and flog itself some more by increasing spending on something that is outside its jurisdiction.

I think that the Canadian people, including the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, know full well that water purification—because the motion he has put to us is indeed about water purification or water treatment—is primarily a municipal responsibility. Whether you live in Quebec, in Ontario or in any other Canadian province, with the exception of Indian reservations, this responsibility is entirely, primarily and directly incumbent upon the municipal authorities. Water purification, be it in Shawinigan, in the municipality of Saint-Georges-de-Champlain, in my riding, or in the city of Ottawa or the city of Vanier, for that matter, is a municipal responsibility.

Over and above that level of government, the provinces have responsibilities too, because municipalities are an arm of the provincial government. Take for instance a case I am familiar with, Mr. Speaker, that of Quebec. In that province, we have an organization called the *Société québécoise d'assainissement des eaux* which has been operating in Quebec since the 1970s. It is responsible for carrying out, in conjunction with the municipalities, cities, towns and parishes of the province, an extensive water purification program.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, come to think of it, that organization has nearly completed what it had set out to do. It was responsible for building new water treatment systems in most of Quebec's regions, and in most cases it did. For instance, in Montreal, vast water treatment systems were built by the city, in co-operation with the Quebec government.

In my region, in the electoral district of Saint-Maurice, the same procedure was followed in many cases. About 10 years ago, the town of Grand'Mère and the *Société québécoise d'assainissement des eaux* were involved in building one of these systems, which is now being paid for by taxpayers. Next door, Shawinigan will be doing this shortly. They have been waiting for about 10 years, but now money is available from the Government of Quebec and the municipalities of Shawinigan and Shawinigan South. It means that taxpayers in Shawinigan and Shawinigan South, thanks to up to 90 per cent funding by the *Société québécoise d'assainissement des eaux*, will be able to deal with local water treatment problems.