

Water Resources

implementation of any plans or projects referred to in paragraphs (d) and (e) of clause 4.

This last provision is of particular importance because it clearly implies that the federal government is prepared not only to formulate plans but to implement them. There is the further implication that the federal government will pay for a substantial portion of that implementation. I hope the federal government is planning to make a substantial contribution—by “substantial” I mean at least 50 per cent—to the cost.

The dramatic feature of this bill is that, in cases of significant national interest, where all reasonable efforts have been made by the federal government to reach agreement with the provincial governments on water resource management and its ancillary aspects have been unfruitful, the federal government can then act on its own. Thus, we in the Montreal area can now expect action to be taken within the foreseeable future.

I both hope and expect agreement will be reached with the province of Quebec to establish the necessary anti-pollution programs for our rivers in Quebec, and more particularly for the St. Lawrence. It would be in the interests of Quebec, and especially the citizens of the Montreal area, if such action were taken soon.

● (3:50 p.m.)

The fact that there is a possibility of direct federal action if no agreement is reached with Quebec and Quebec does not move on it itself within a reasonable time, is an incentive to provincial action. I am singling out my province because I represent the most populated constituency in that province, but this indirect form of pressure applies to any province which is going slow on anti-pollution measures. The threat of possible direct federal action will give the necessary incentive to Quebec to devise and initiate, in collaboration with the government of Canada, measures to deal with pollution of this most important body of water in our province—a matter which is of vital concern to all residents of the federal constituency of Laprairie.

My constituency borders on Canada's major water artery, the St. Lawrence. For too long the citizens living in the Montreal area generally, and in particular those living in areas bordering the St. Lawrence, have been deprived of the recreational benefits of its use. I should like to hear a brief indication of what the minister considers to be significant

national interest. I suspect this would not apply, for example, to the Chateaugay River which flows across the international boundary. It would be useful to the House if the minister today or next week gave an indication of how he will determine those matters which are of significant national interest. Will it be water flow or the non-recreational use which has been made of particular water bodies in the past? I should like clarification from the minister as to this definition.

The other matter to which I draw the minister's attention is the desperate need which exists in Canada and throughout the world at this time for cheaper methods of sewage disposal. We know how to deal with water pollution of our rivers and streams. We know that several alternative sewage disposal methods are available to municipalities. We also know that up to now these methods have proven terribly expensive. Surely, with our advanced technology we in Canada are in a position to develop less expensive methods of dealing with pollution. Surely, there is a way of dealing with pollution without bankrupting ourselves in the process.

I will give an example of just how expensive an anti-pollution drive can be and how, if proper planning is not instituted, it can result in ridiculous situations. Five years ago, in a part of my former constituency a town built a sewage disposal plant on the recommendation of its engineers. It cost about \$500,000. No other town bordering the Chateaugay River has since installed a sewage disposal plant. The result is that this town with a population of approximately 2,000 is saddled with a plant that costs \$40,000 a year or more to operate. It is cleaning the sewage and pouring the cleansed water into a river which is polluted.

In my view there has been in this instance, a mis-allocation of public funds. The federal government is involved in that Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation approved the loan to the municipality. Officers of CMHC have argued that once an application by a municipality has been approved by the municipal affairs department of Quebec, they are duty-bound to allocate the funds. CMHC has not fulfilled its duty to the public by simply accepting, without submitting any views of its own, a request from a municipality for a loan to construct a plant which is without question too expensive and which has proven to be an almost unbearable load on the taxpayers of the municipality.

[Mr. Watson.]