

*Fuel Consumption Standards*

Again, this legislation focuses attention on the need to reduce fuel consumption in the face of rising prices and increasingly uncertain supplies. Obviously, one solution is using a different fuel. Hon. members will recall that the government has already taken some steps. We have offered grants of \$400 under the propane vehicle grant program for those converting their farm or commercial vehicles to a propane fuel system or purchasing such vehicles new. Our target is 100,000 propane-powered vehicles by 1985. Since the program started last June we have received about 2,500 applications for grants. So far, about 3,650 vehicles have been accepted as eligible to receive the \$400. That represents a saving of about 955 barrels a day of oil which would otherwise have been consumed as gasoline by these vehicles. The program has dispensed \$1,460,800 so far. But it is more than just our grant program that makes propane gas an attractive alternative for motorists. Propane also offers a fuel that is significantly lower in price than conventional gasoline.

• (1830)

We have as well offered contributions to those willing to convert vehicles to compressed natural gas and help us demonstrate, in actual Canadian driving conditions, the value and versatility of this fuel. We are offering \$600 contributions to those willing to undertake the conversion and to commit themselves to report back to us on what improvements they enjoyed in fuel consumption as a result.

The government has promised to hold the price of natural gas below that of oil as far as is possible, and that price differential as well should make compressed natural gas attractive as an alternative fuel. There are already more than 350,000 vehicles in the world operating on compressed natural gas, but we in Canada have little experience with the fuel, the hardware to make use of it or the results that can be achieved by making the switch. Our program started only in January, so it is a little early to judge any statistical results. However, we do know that we have natural gas in abundance and that as a fuel, it is less environmentally hazardous than conventional gasoline or diesel fuel.

We want transport fuel consumption in transport brought down. The transport sector is eating up too much of our limited supplies and we want to be in a position to achieve further improvements if this gentle approach does not work. I am sure that it will work because I know the automotive industry is as interested as the rest of us are in fuel consumption and energy self-sufficiency. If I needed any reassurance of that, I got it earlier this year when I met with the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers' Association. We all showed a great willingness to co-operate at that gathering.

As with other pieces of legislation being put before Parliament this spring, this bill is a means of formalizing the National Energy Program of October, 1980. It is just as important as all of the others, perhaps more so, since it addresses the crucial issue of conservation, the area where the actions of every citizen can mean so much in terms of saving fuel and buying

us time against the day, however distant, when oil wells everywhere run dry.

**Mr. John McDermid (Brampton-Georgetown):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to lead off the debate for the opposition on Bill C-107 respecting motor vehicle fuel consumption standards. If the minister was serious in some of the comments he has just made, I think it would be very sad indeed. He talked about the importance of conserving gas and that the responsibility of Canadian citizens was to ease back on the gas pedal and to conserve, conserve and conserve. Yet when we come into the House for a vote or a series of votes, we see lining up outside the House—it happened at question period today—a series of limousines, each one belonging to a cabinet minister. Every limousine's engine is kept running waiting for the cabinet minister to come out from the vote or to come out from question period.

One evening I made a point of counting the number of limousines with engines running. It was an evening when five votes took place. This took about an hour. Fourteen limousines were outside the House of Commons with their engines idling during the whole period. They were being kept warm for the privileged bunch over there.

The minister tells us that we have to conserve. It is the same old double standard that we hear around here on everything else. We hear that everybody must tighten his or her belt, except for them. We hear that everybody must conserve, except them. If the minister wanted to do something serious, the first thing he should do after this debate would be to go back to his office, dictate a memo to every member of the cabinet and to every other person who has a chauffeur driven car directing them to turn off the engines when not in use and thus conserve energy. Fourteen cars idling for an hour outside the House of Commons burns up an awful lot of gas. How do you expect the Canadian public to accept what the minister says about conservation when that kind of nonsense goes on here every day when the House is sitting?

In 1976 Canada implemented voluntary fuel efficiency standards for automobiles. Likewise in 1976 the government promised to bring forward legislation to put these standards into law. Well, we have finally seen that done. But it took six years after the government made that promise.

The government has never had to pass any of these efficiency standards into law. The government has been able to rely on the powerful American legislation. More important—and the minister realizes it today, and if he were up front with the Canadian people he would admit it—if he passed some regulations concerning fuel consumption for automobiles it would certainly be the tail wagging the dog because we have a North American auto industry and not a Canadian auto industry, so the minister must follow the regulations of the United States.

This is really a phony bill when one thinks about it. The smartest thing for the minister to do would be for him to say that yes, we have to label the cars here in Canada. It is being done now. All the ads reveal fuel consumption. But the simple