

Supply

have enough facts at their disposal to judge the performance of both the Progressive Conservative government over the past seven months, and the previous Liberal administration which had been in power for 15 years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I should like to deal with the sharing of responsibilities in Canada. We are living in a Confederation. There is therefore in some areas a double jurisdiction. For the information of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition who seems quite confused about this matter and in his interpretation of the relevant legislation in this country, I must say that the federal government clearly must assume a general responsibility in the area of the environment, but that it is up to the provinces to implement the legislation, to make the regulations operative by setting up their own legal framework within the confine of their own needs and jurisdiction. Thus, the provinces have the necessary power to administer most natural resources, including non renewable and forest resources, and to decide environmental issues within their own boundaries. And for the information of the former Minister of the Environment who does not seem to understand our Constitution, I suggest he should peruse Sections 91 and 92 of the Constitutional Act, 1867.

Unless the Hon. Leader of the Opposition is dreaming of rewriting the Constitution, Mr. Speaker, this sharing of powers is essentially what determines the interventions of the various jurisdictions. In the case of the Kenora spill, therefore, the Ontario government was the first to take action as it was its duty to do under the Ontario Environmental Act and they take charge of the situation. Hence, my department had only an auxiliary, complementary and supportive role to play.

Mr. Speaker, these provisions are consistent with a certain logic or rationale. When a disaster occurs in a given location, it is clear that a leader must take charge of the situation and coordinate action and thereby avoid total confusion.

Now, concerning the involvement of my Department in this matter, I said earlier that our interventions have been quite numerous and within the limits of our responsibilities.

On April 9, 1985, through its Alberta office, my Department advised the various provincial offices that four trucks operated by the Kinetic company would be carrying PCB wastes from Quebec. A description of the trucks was also provided. On April 11, 1985, a description of the PCB waste consignment which the four trucks were to transport was sent by my Departmental office in Edmonton to regional offices of my Department in the various provinces.

My Department's Environmental Protection Service in the Quebec area was notified by the Alberta office and in turn informed the Quebec authorities on April 9 and 11, 1985, so that the latter could enforce the regulations concerning the transportation of dangerous goods which exist already in the Quebec jurisdiction.

An inspector for Environment Quebec, Mr. Legault, checked the shipment before the trucks left on April 11 of this year. Kinetic Ecological Resource Group Ltd. also advised Environment Quebec directly, before the goods were shipped, that is, before April 11.

Mr. Speaker, many authorities were involved in acting on this emergency. I shall name only a few. When the incident occurred in Kenora on Saturday, April 13, 1985, it was immediately reported to the Ontario Provincial Police, which got in touch right away with Transport Canada's emergency center. The following parties were then immediately activated to play their specific role. The Kenora police, health officers in the Kenora area, the Emergency Measures Organization in the Kenora area, the Ontario Department of the Environment in Thunder Bay, the Ontario Department of Transport and Communications, the Ontario Department of Northern Affairs, Environment Canada and the Environmental Protection Services' emergency department. In accordance with the agreed plan for intervention in case of disasters, Ontario acted as chief emergency coordinator in the field and obtained advice, services and support from other services including the federal departments concerned. At the present time, we are keeping in close touch with our Ontario colleagues to provide for the transportation of the hazardous materials to their destination and to assess the extent of the contamination that occurred.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important that Canadians realize that since this Government was sworn in, there has been a high degree of federal and provincial solidarity and of respect for shared powers and jurisdictions, so that we are able to act quickly in case of a crisis. I submit, with due respect, that we were very quick to act, not only in this particular emergency situation but also to set up effective legislation that will help us protect Canadians when hazardous materials are being shipped. That is more than the previous Liberal Government ever did in the 15 years it was in power.

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Minister for devoting half of her speech to my leader and myself. However, she has not answered the question which deals with the cancellation, as of April 1 of this year, of the toxic chemicals management program. That program is vital to the long-term health of Canadians. It is my understanding that as of the first of this month the program no longer exists. If that is correct, I would ask the Minister to give us a thorough explanation as to why that program was cancelled.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Blais-Grenier: Mr. Speaker, I must say that the Liberal environment critic has been spreading all kinds of erroneous information around the country. One example is what he said in the House a few minutes ago, namely that I had yet to meet with the representative of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. He knows perfectly well that the