

*Water Resources*

Because of the government's mistaken view of its responsibility in relation to the cities of this country, and because of its austerity program, the fact is that in the next few years the cities of Canada will not meet their responsibilities; they will not move with the speed with which they should in modernizing their sewage disposal and treatment facilities. This is a fact, and all the speeches the minister may make either in Parliament or across the country will mean nothing until the federal government gives to the municipalities and the provinces the kind of meaningful financial assistance which would encourage them to meet their responsibilities in this field. This has not been done to date, and I believe it will not be done in the coming years as a result of the mistaken and niggardly policies of the federal government.

**Mr. Ian Watson (Laprairie):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted with Bill C-144. Its main objective is to provide for the management of the water resources of Canada, their improvement, development and utilization. I am happy that the federal government has moved off the sidelines and that it will now be saying to the provinces, including my own province of Quebec, that it is prepared to enter into agreements to establish on a national, provincial, regional or lake or river basin basis, intergovernmental committees or other bodies which, among other things, would maintain continuing consultation on water resource matters, advise on priorities for research, planning, conservation, development and utilization based on the formulation of water policies and programs, and facilitate the co-ordination and implementation of water policies and programs.

• (3:40 p.m.)

I should like to direct a question to the minister in this regard. Perhaps the point does not require clarification, but I would appreciate some assurance when he replies. I presume that since no reference is made in clause 3 to national interest, these bodies could be established, in agreement with the provinces, in regard to any river covered by the legislation, which would include both boundary and international rivers.

There is a river in my constituency, the Chateauguay River, which crosses the international border as a stream but is nevertheless described as a river both on the United States side and on the Canadian side of the border. It develops into a river on the Canadian side, and in turn has a tributary or two,

which themselves are called rivers and originate a few miles across the international boundary. I know that it is a matter of very immediate interest to the people in the counties of Chateauguay and Huntingdon, through which these streams and rivers flow, that the Chateauguay River basin be included under the terms of the act. I know that they hope it will be possible, by agreement with the government of Quebec, to establish a consultative body, as provided by the bill, for the Chateauguay River valley.

We have in the Montreal region a number of bodies of water associated with the St. Lawrence River and which I presume are of national interest in the same way as the St. Lawrence River. The Lake St. Louis portion of the St. Lawrence River was, until a few years ago, Montreal's major water playground. On the south shore, the major water recreational area has been the Laprairie basin. Both of these bodies of water which form part of the St. Lawrence River are now seriously polluted and unuseable for swimming purposes.

The pollution of Lake St. Louis and the Laprairie basin has been so serious over the last few years that we now find small craft navigation is being impeded by the growth of weeds, which have primarily been caused by phosphates entering the St. Lawrence River system from farm and industrial waste as well as from household detergents. Pollution has rendered these two most beautiful Montreal area sections of the St. Lawrence River practically unusable for recreation. It is a situation that we realize has required attention for a long time. Happily, this bill is finally going to provide the impetus for action.

This bill provides that the federal government may enter into an agreement with a province to establish an intergovernmental committee with jurisdiction for, among other things, river basins. The bill also provides that where there is a national interest in water resource management, the federal government can enter into an agreement with the provincial government concerned to establish and maintain an inventory of the waters, to conduct research, and to formulate comprehensive water resource management plans, including detailed estimates of the cost of implementation of those plans. It also provides for the designing of projects for the efficient conservation, development and utilization of such waters and, finally, for the