

*Oral Questions*

My question to the Minister of the Environment is this. Why did the minister not provide the leadership in obtaining federal-provincial agreements to protect drinking water for all Canadians?

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, when my colleague talks about a recycled plan, that the only thing that is recycled in this plan is the paper that it is printed on. Everything else is new and meaningful.

**Mr. Joe Fontana (London East):** Mr. Speaker, the provinces and the municipalities have been pushing this government for years to adopt an infrastructure program which would clean up sewage and water and share the responsibility among the three levels of government.

Instead, this government's answer was to provide and offer to sponsor a conference. Worse still, it wants to force another tax on drinking water of somewhere between 200 to 300 per cent.

Why is this government ignoring its environmental responsibilities and ignoring the co-operative approach in dealing with water and health concerns of Canadians?

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to be very clear for the record. One hon. member opposite says that we do not have taxes in this plan and another says that we intend to increase taxes by 300 per cent.

The record can read very clearly that we are not proposing any new taxes in this green plan. We are proposing a comprehensive action plan for Canadians for the next five years. The plan will evolve. We will add year six after year one and year seven after year two. It is the most comprehensive environmental plan for the country that has ever been put before the House ever since Confederation.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of the Environment. Canadian farmers are anxious to build an industry less dependent upon chemicals and pesticides. Other countries such as the Netherlands have already implemented specific positive measures. Yet today in your green paper all you can assure Canadians is that there will be another report in 1991.

Why the delay? Why are you continuing to put this industry at risk?

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite. We are not putting the industry at risk at all. As recently as last Saturday, I have had meetings with the industry. It is very concerned about the chemicals it uses in agriculture, and it would like to work with us to figure out the best approaches to deal with the issue.

The chemicals are pollutants and the agricultural people in this country are conscious of that and they want to work with government to find the best solution. That is exactly what we intend to do.

**Mr. Speaker:** I know the hon. member would want to put the question through the Chair. The hon. member for a supplementary.

**Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same minister. On page 28 of the green plan there is the following incredible statement:

Native people are particularly at risk from environmental hazards due to traditional lifestyle patterns and food sources.

They are not at risk because of what they have done. They are at risk because of what we have done.

Why did the minister not deal directly with those companies and provincial Crown corporations which take turns in destroying our aboriginal communities?

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, first of all the interpretation of that quote does not do justice to the statement in general that was made in the green plan about the plight of aboriginal people. We are addressing the concerns of aboriginal people in the green plan.

In terms of their traditional living habits, obviously there is a problem. There is a problem because the food chain for aboriginal people is quite different from that one would find in a city such as Ottawa, Montreal, or Toronto. We are concerned about that. We need better science. We need more help. The aboriginal people have pointed that out to us and we are working very closely with them to come to the best solution possible.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East):** Mr. Speaker, the green plan projects new spending on energy conservation, renewables, and alternatives to counteract global warming of an average maximum \$115 million a year.