

Oral Questions

asked whether Canada should rely on the U.S. submarine force to provide security under the ice in Canadian waters, only 10 per cent agreed.

I think one must look at the polls in their fullest context rather than simply singling one out, because there are discrepancies from time to time.

COSTS OF ACQUISITION

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau): Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear from the figures just given to us that, despite the efforts of the Government, successive polls have shown more and more people are opposing this venture as they become aware of it.

I want to remind the Minister that the proposed submarine program is supposed to cost \$8 billion. That figure does not include the cost of maintaining the fleet or providing refuelling facilities. Will the Deputy Prime Minister come clean with the Canadian people and give us the cost of this program? Is he ready to admit today that the total cost will run into the tens of billions of dollars?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member was in the House on a number of occasions when the Opposition challenged the figures with the Minister of National Defence. I think he made very clear and precise what figures were allocated to the purchase of the nuclear submarines.

May I simply remind the Hon. Member and the House that this Government produced a White Paper on National Defence, the first one in 16 years, which clearly outlined Canada's defence policy. We committed ourselves to a three ocean defence policy, as well as to the ongoing commitments to NATO and NORAD. We also committed ourselves to the domestic revitalization of our regular and reserve Armed Forces. I think it is quite obvious that the White Paper in total has been very well accepted by Canadians.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

POSSIBLE DIVERSION OF WATER FROM SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER INTO SOURIS RIVER

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. His Department and the Province of Saskatchewan are engaged in a study, a copy of which I have in front of me. The study speaks of the possibility of diverting water from the South

Saskatchewan River and the Qu'Appelle Valley River into the Souris River to meet the needs of a dam which the Premier of Saskatchewan insists should be built on the Souris. The Souris River also flows into North Dakota.

Can the Minister give us the assurance that his Government would never approve diverting water from the South Saskatchewan or Qu'Appelle River Basins into the Souris River to be exported to the U.S.?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am a little puzzled by the last part of the question where he talks about water exports. My understanding is that the purpose of the project in question is not to export water in the sense that term is used in the federal water policy. Indeed, if that is the purpose, and I do not think it is, it would be in violation of the federal water policy we articulated in great detail some months ago.

REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT APPROVE DIVERSION OF WATER

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, the federal water policy is opposed to any inter-basin transfer. Yet this study talks about an inter-basin transfer. Let me quote:

The available draft in the Souris River is not sufficient for projected long-term requirements. The future development of the Qu'Appelle River to the Souris River diversion therefore appears to be a viable source of supply.

The director of the study was canned by the provincial Government because he embarrassed the provincial Minister by mentioning there was not enough water in the South Saskatchewan River to meet the needs of the Souris River.

Again, can the Minister give us, and especially the farmers of southern Saskatchewan who are experiencing short-term drought and the possibility of long-term drought, the assurance that his Government will never approve diverting water which could eventually be exported to the United States? Give us that clear assurance.

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is excelling himself in confusion. We are talking about an international waterway which covers at least three jurisdictions, two of them Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and two countries. The federal Government has an obligation to satisfy itself that every environmental consideration is being factored into the equation because we administer the International River Improvements Act.

The permit has been applied for by the Province of Saskatchewan. I received it in January. Every due process is being followed, and I am honoring my obligations as a Minister of the Crown in that respect.