

*Environmental Affairs*

The reality is that this is a federal responsibility. There can be no getting away from that. The federal Government has the responsibility for the environment of Canada. It has the responsibility for the environment of boundary waters. Whether it is the Ottawa River, Lake Superior, Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, the St. Lawrence River, or the Gulf, anything we discharge into those waters in eastern Canada contributes to the pollution of an international waterway and is therefore the responsibility of the federal Government. There is no getting around that.

• (1500)

I want to quote from a speech by an Hon. Member of this House which was given to a municipal organization. I will not initially tell you the name because I want you to guess where it is coming from:

—if all three levels of government in Canada do not collectively deal with the growing water problem in the country, the problem will become unmanageable.

Across Canada, municipalities are already struggling with aging plants and delivery systems that undermine the clean water all Canadians need and have a right to expect.

Fact: Only 10 per cent of all raw sewage east of Ontario is treated.

Fact: More than eight million Canadians, a third of the entire population, live in municipalities that do not provide sewage treatment.

Fact: Water quality in Toronto, Canada's largest city, is causing so much concern that some politicians are calling for a \$200 million pipeline from Georgian Bay to serve the city.

Fact: Water quality has become such a concern to Canadians that they spent \$80 million on bottled drinking water in 1986. This figure is expected to increase by 15 per cent this year.

The bill for the next five years for repairing aging underground pipes alone is estimated at \$3 billion with an additional \$3 billion needed to improve water and sewage treatment facilities.

Who spoke those words? A member of the Opposition? A government back-bencher? They were spoken by the Hon. Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan). You know what else he said? He said:

Let me begin by ending the suspense, for you and for me: The federal government does not intend to restore previously dismantled municipal programs. That's the bad news!

He was right about that.

The reality is that municipalities by themselves cannot afford the price tag of repairing the existing infrastructure, let alone providing the needed infrastructure to make sure our sewage is treated, not just primary treatment which is basically chopping up the lumps, but secondary and tertiary treatment as well so that we return to the environment what we took out. They do not have enough money to replace their aging water pipes. The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier talked about wooden water pipes in Ottawa. In the City of Thunder Bay we have leaded pipes and we all know the ramifications of that for human beings.

We have two systems of taxation, a provincial and federal income tax system and a municipal property tax system. In theory the income tax system is fair and progressive. You need

to have a certain level of income before you start paying. In theory, at least, the more money you make, the greater your share of the cost of running the country. However, property taxes and user fees, because the Minister is hiding behind user fees as his reason for not implementing a federal-provincial municipal program, are paid regardless of the ability to pay. They are based on the value of a home which may have been purchased or built 20, 30 or 40 years ago. Because of inflation its value has gone up astronomically. If you are a senior citizen you do not have the money at hand to pay taxes based on the value of a house at \$50,000 or \$60,000 or \$80,000. Yet you are taxed based on that amount.

The same applies to water rates. They are of value in restricting consumption, and I agree every household in this country should be metered as a means of reminding people on a regular basis how much they are using and also remind them to restrict that usage. However, it will cost us anywhere from \$12 billion to \$15 billion over five years to repair the existing system. Municipalities cannot afford that by themselves. All 10 provinces agree with that, and have also agreed to match municipal contributions one for one up to one-third of the cost of the program. What the Canadian Federation of Municipalities is asking for is that the federal Government, the senior partner in this triumvirate, participate to the same level so we can repair our cities, their roads, sewers, sewage treatment plants and recreational facilities.

Even though the money from a federal-provincial-municipal program under the resolution put forward by the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier would be focused on specific areas such as water purification, sewage treatment and storm sewer building programs, it would alleviate the pressure in other municipal areas so tax dollars can be used to repair park buildings, bridges and roads.

Just to give you an idea of the state of things in our cities, I have a study done by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities entitled "Municipal Infrastructure in Canada". It shows that for water treatment facilities, 15 per cent of the existing ones need some repair, much repair, or are not acceptable. For water distribution, 30 per cent; for sewage collection, 45 per cent; for sewage treatment, 25 per cent; for storm sewer treatment, 45 per cent. Some 65 per cent of our roads, 55 per cent of our walks, 45 per cent of our bridges, and 30 per cent of our buildings and parks need some repair, much repair, or are not acceptable.

Coming back to the environmental aspect, there has been study after study of municipalities along the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. We know the problem areas. We know raw sewage goes directly into nature's sewers, but those sewers were not designed to carry away the kind of effluent we are putting into that system today. It is not just human waste, it is deadly, toxic chemicals being pumped from our industries into our sewers and directly into our lakes and rivers without any kind of treatment. It is imperative, if we are to turn this situation around, that the federal Government participate. I urge the government side to take the message to the Minister