

present Government, although some initiatives of late have been taken, but not nearly enough.

Water quality is of such a concern to Canadians that last year they spent more than \$80 million on bottled water. Most of those people are afraid to drink the water that goes into their homes in our municipalities because of all the additives.

The Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands (Mr. Milliken) says "rubbish". I hope that the people in Kingston are aware of the problems that they face, and other municipalities face, in terms of safe water for drinking. Perhaps the water is fine in Kingston, or perhaps where I live in Brantford it is fine. However, Canadians who refused to drink out of their own taps spent \$80 million to buy bottled water and it is becoming a serious problem.

The value of Canadian water treatment and delivery systems is now more than \$100 billion. The bill for the next five years for repairing aging underground pipes is estimated at \$3 billion and another \$3 billion will be needed to improve water and sewage treatment facilities. That is \$6 billion needed by our municipalities over the next five years. There is nothing that I can see in the Estimates that will go to any of those projects to help to solve any of those problems.

According to George Cuff, President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, municipal governments and the provinces are willing to sit down and discuss funding such rehabilitation programs. The federal Government is not as willing, according to Mr. Cuff.

Another area that touches the day-to-day lives of average Canadians in their homes and on their way to work is the whole area of transportation. The transportation sector, roads and bridges, is the most neglected area of municipal infrastructure today. The Government of Canada levies heavy taxes on the users of gasoline and diesel fuels, yet channels none of those revenues into the road system.

Recently, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Bouchard) has designated certain highways to be national highways. In doing so, all he has done is to change the name. He has not provided any funding to upgrade those highways, make them safer, or preserve them. Many of our highways are rotting right beneath our eyes and we are doing very little about it because the funding is extremely limited. The Government therefore should consider earmarking some of these funds for transportation and

Borrowing Authority

infrastructure. I emphasize that we are talking here in terms of billions of dollars. Local taxpayers on their property assessments who are being gouged for such things as education and other municipal services, cannot be expected raise the other \$6 billion just for these two areas alone. This will make owning a house or maintaining a house absolutely prohibitive.

• (1630)

Former Environment Minister, Mr. Tom McMillan, said the Government is unable to act because of the Constitution. That is always a very convenient way out around this place, and it holds no water at all as an argument. The provinces have already said that they are willing to co-operate on any constitutional change or agreement that may be necessary. In fact, a communiqué issued by the twenty-ninth annual premiers conference in Saskatoon last August stated:

The Premiers agree that the continued competitiveness of the Canadian economy will depend to a significant degree on the maintenance and improvement of vital local infrastructure. A healthy economy as well as healthy and liveable cities, towns and villages depend on having adequate transportation networks, water supplies and sewers.

The Premiers called on the federal Government to support provinces in maintaining municipal infrastructure. We would certainly like to repeat that call here today.

Along with the expenditure of some \$6 billion to improve local municipal infrastructures there would be a tremendous job creation program. So we are not talking about throwing money away on making local improvements. We are actually talking about investing money. The program that the FCM has proposed, which is supported by my Party, will create 330,000 person-years of employment over its five-year life span and strengthen communities across the country. FCM president, George Cuff, has said:

Something is wrong with a society that has people, who would rather work, lining up on a crumbling sidewalk to collect UIC benefits.

I would like to speak about another aspect of the borrowing authority and what the Government should be spending money on, or borrowing money to spend money on, which it is not doing or is doing in a haphazard and limited way; that is older worker retraining. One of the great tragedies of the workplace today is the plant closure that throws out of work lifetime workers who have put in 10, 15, 25 years. They have reached the age of 45 or 50 and they are thrown out of work through no fault of their own. They find it extremely difficult to find