

cies of the current system. We need to promote more efficient resource use and improve management methods in the industry. User-pay pricing presents a major opportunity to achieve this.

This is the federal role, and within it the federal government is encouraging water resource management agencies at the local level to institute appropriate water conservation and sustainable programs through the development and demonstration of these options.

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to congratulate the member for Ottawa—Vanier for his motion, it is a noteworthy one. We must be persistent in this area of municipal infrastructure. He has tackled it in a creative way by isolating water from the whole area of municipal infrastructure, which I certainly endorse.

However, I am also quite realistic. If this is ever to happen I suggest that when the federal government does come onside—and it would certainly appear from the previous member's statement that this government is not prepared to get involved in a big way, although I understand there may have been a positive announcement earlier today. I have no details of that. I believe it pertains to the highway system in this country. I would salute such an initiative.

Nevertheless, isolating the water and isolating the roadways are both positive initiatives. However, I hope that anything that will be done will be under a tripartite agreement among the three levels of government. I do not believe that any one level can afford to decide what must be done for the communities and for the infrastructure of this country.

It is absolutely imperative that we all participate because the price tag has risen from \$12 billion to \$15 billion and now to \$20 billion and everyone is still saying: "We can't afford to do it." When will we be able to afford to do it? We could not afford to do it in good times. We cannot afford to do it in bad times. There are no other times available to us.

In the meantime the infrastructure of the country is crumbling beneath us. I will give some examples later on.

I would like to quote an individual by the name of Don Gamble. He says: "Water is to Canadians as the Alps are to the Swiss, something that transcends the resource. It is so much a part of how Canadians see themselves. We

are a land of rivers and lakes. Our history is built on it". The previous speaker said: "Well, it is your water, but we sure as heck want to charge you for it".

Marjorie Lamb asks: "Will our great-grandchildren be able to drink the water we use to hose down the dog?" That is an interesting statement because I read that 100 municipalities in this country pour raw sewage into the waterways. What a damnable statistic to even quote. I am poetic today. I have been reminded of the line: "water water everywhere". However, there may not be anything to drink and that must be a concern.

This jurisdictional argument has to stop because, as the government says, there is only one taxpayer. Surely this issue demands that all three levels participate on an issue that is important to all Canadians.

The government talks about a prosperity agenda and competitiveness. If we are to become competitive and there is indeed prosperity around the corner, for which we all wish so very much, will our infrastructure be able to accommodate this new prosperity if our bridges, our roadways, our sewer systems and our water resources are not capable of handling the new economy which we hope will burgeon? Of course, we are still waiting.

How serious is it? Japan, and I do not want to follow everything that Japan does, has embarked on a municipal infrastructure renewal to the tune of a trillion dollars. It recognizes that it is going to have to address this problem now. Japan is not waiting and saying: "Well it is not our responsibility, it must be somebody else's".

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has been lobbying and has spoken loud and clear for years and years and years on this issue.

Parties from time to time have come onside and said: "Yes, we endorse it". The Liberal Party did support municipal infrastructure until the early eighties. It did so in an *ad hoc* way. It would participate in individual programs but never participated in a national agenda, which is now absolutely essential. It too dropped out of that scene even on an *ad hoc* basis. This federal government has basically dropped out of it completely.

One of the ministers, I have forgotten who it was, said: "We don't get much of a bang for our buck. If we participate in municipal infrastructure we don't get the credit that perhaps we are deserving of for the money we put in". FCM has been extremely persistent, it tabled a report just a month ago.