

Adjournment Debate

would increase the financial self-sufficiency of waste exchanges.

Following this review in 1991, the green plan also identified waste exchange as a key initiative worthy of pursuing. Through the green plan, moneys have been earmarked to expand and to help the waste exchange program achieve a strong economic base in order to sustain itself by the year 2000.

Environment Canada recognizes that the waste exchange program will play a major role in achieving the goal of cutting waste by 50 per cent from 1988 levels by the year 2000.

However, in order for such a program to be successful more support from Canadian industry, which also relies on recyclables imported from the U.S., will be necessary.

Waste exchanges and treatment, proper transportation, storage and disposal facilities are all components of waste management. Unfortunately, these types of activities, although essential, are not attributed an as favourable an image as recycling.

Recycling is only one, albeit very important, of the elements of the four Rs: recycling, reuse, recovery and reduce.

All these measures take time and are not all available at this very moment. It is true that hazardous waste is being generated through industrial processes right now. However, there are structures in place and tighter controls planned to manage these wastes in an environmentally sound manner.

For these reasons and the negative impact they would have on the Canadian economy, the motion before us today is unnecessary and, indeed, undesirable.

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a moment or two to intervene in this very important debate.

On examining the motion before us it appears to be the intent of the motion to protect the Canadian environment by reducing the waste coming into the country, but the motion does not include any measures which would help Canadians to manage their own waste at home, nor would such a ban introduce any new measures for the actual reduction in the volume of

hazardous waste being produced in this country. That is a very narrow view of the management of the global environment.

As well, a total ban on importations may cause other countries to forbid imports of hazardous waste generated in Canada. This would immediately be cause for environmental concern since not all areas of the country have facilities necessary to treat all kinds of hazardous waste.

In my own province of Alberta we have the Swan Hills treatment centre, which is one of the finest in the world, but it is situated some distance from the locations of production of hazardous waste. Inability to export waste would mean storing hazardous substances until new treatment plants could be built.

The construction would take several years and could lead to improper storage as storage space fills up or to other more dangerous practices such as dumping.

Even if the required types of treatment facilities already existed in abundance in Canada, those sites would probably be located at a great distance from some waste generators as in the case of Swan Hills.

Waste from Canadian generators would therefore be on the road for longer periods of time, increasing the possibility of transportation accidents. In addition, these facilities may not have the required capacity. Still more facilities would have to be built. Overall, a complete import ban could create severe problems for Canadian industry as well as the environment.

The cost in terms of dollars and of damage to the Canadian environment could be very high indeed.

Consistent with its commitment to global environment protection, Canada signed on March 29, 1989 the Basel convention on the control of trans-boundary movements of hazardous waste and their disposal. A convention which came into force on May 5 of this year requires all countries to control their shipments of hazardous waste crossing their borders.

Under the provisions of the Basel convention member countries have the duty to ensure that the waste generated in their country is disposed of in an environmentally sound manner. This means that each government must allow only those exports of hazardous waste which cannot be treated in an appropriate and timely manner in their own country.