

and park lands. These properties are of great benefit to the citizens of Ottawa and in many instances fill a need that the city might otherwise be called upon to meet. However, since the main thrust of the question raised by the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton concerns business tax, I will address myself to that question.

Business tax is not a type of tax in lieu of which grants are authorized by the Municipal Grants Act. The payment of business taxes on federal departmental property would not only require legislative authority, but also the implicit or explicit assumption that the operation of a government is a "business." This would be very difficult to justify since departmental properties are primarily service-oriented and are not used for the purpose of deriving a gain or profit. However, most federal Crown corporations which do operate with a view to generating revenues sufficient to cover costs or make a profit currently do make their own grant payments in lieu of business taxes.

I am talking about CMHC, for example, for whose buildings my minister's department is responsible.

Mrs. Pigott: What about the buildings on Wellington Street?

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): The general rationale underlying the imposition of the municipal business tax is that those who operate a business venture, with the expectation of a gain or profit by virtue of such operation, benefit from the local services, amenities, labour force, transportation facilities and purchasing power inherent in the municipality and should pay an amount over and above real property taxes for the privilege of being provided with many of the elements necessary for turning a profit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his allotted time has expired.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS—POSSIBILITY OF PROHIBITING USE OF ASBESTOS FIBRES IN PREPARATION OF FOOD AND BEVERAGES

Hon. Stanley Haidasz (Parkdale): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious to the distinguished members of this august assembly that we are living in a period of environmental disease. Increasing urbanization and industrialization, especially expending technology, have altered our environment to such an extent that humans, animals, and plants are being exposed to an ever-growing number of harmful pollutants.

Recently a medical scientist at the National Cancer Institute stated that cancer in the last quarter of this century can be considered as a disease whose cause and control are rooted in the technology of our society. A biochemist at McMaster University was quoted in a recent newspaper article as saying that environmental effects cause up to 90 per cent of cancers and that current efforts are directed to a cure, rather than elimination of causes. In view of these remarks and mounting evidence of new toxic substances poisoning the environment, a comprehensive investigation of environmental pollutants

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should be undertaken by our government in co-operation with university and industrial scientists without further delay.

The eradication of present harmful pollutants as well as the prevention of toxic substances in the future will not only contribute to the improvement of health but also reduce the cost of hospital and medical programs, in addition to saving many man-years in our industries.

The fight against environmental pollutants has been recently intensified in Canada by the establishment of a Department of the Environment as well as the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. The work done by these two federal departments is assisted by the Department of National Health and Welfare to protect people better and the environment against harmful substances. But there is still room for improvement.

● (2210)

This evening I wish to elaborate on the question I directed to the minister on June 29, in effect inquiring whether any steps have been taken to prohibit the use of asbestos in food, beverage and pharmaceutical production in Canada. It is now 50 years since it was first observed that inhalation of asbestos dust was a health hazard. During the past five decades much scientific information has accumulated to prove that asbestos causes a chronic and disabling lung disease called asbestosis, and worse, a lung and abdominal cancer called mesothelioma. Asbestos-associated diseases and deaths are increasing because of the inadequate control of the use of that mineral.

Asbestos is not one mineral, but about 30 hydrous silicates which share the characteristic of a fibrous texture and the ability to split up into minute fibres. It is the serpentine asbestos mineral, called, chrysotile, that accounts for 95 per cent of the world's asbestos consumption, and is the main variety mined and used in Canada. Canada produced 40 to 50 per cent of the world's asbestos of which 95 per cent is exported, leaving 80,000 tons per year for process in Canada.

Asbestos is used widely in the manufacture of approximately 3,000 products. The largest use is in asbestos cement products.

The second largest use is for floor tiles, followed by use in pipe coverings, paints, insulation, automobile brake-linings, clutch facings, and gaskets. Asbestos is also used as a filter medium in food, beverage and pharmaceutical industries, and also in the textiles industry to increase fire resistance of fabrics.

There is now a growing concern about the total amount of asbestos fibres reaching people through many different environmental pathways and from the thousands of products containing asbestos. The large number of products containing asbestos means that it exists in every home, factory and vehicle. Asbestos is found in our water, and also in some food, drug and beverage products both made in Canada and imported from many countries. This mineral has been found in talc products, even in some baby powders.

In view of the extent of the presence of asbestos in our environment, and especially the serious health hazard of asbestos fibres, it is urgent to tighten the mining and industrial