

The Address—Mr. Rochon

I take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to ask again in this House for the dredging of the Mille-Îles and the Back rivers.

Also, in Pont-Viau, the "drinking" water brought in infectious hepatitis, virus disease...

Mr. Speaker, I have just described the condition of waters in the town of Pont-Viau and in several river-side districts of the City of Laval. Drinking water caused some cases of infectious hepatitis, a virus disease. I consulted several specialists about it and they told me that the drinking water in the river-side districts of Laval, particularly in some areas of Ahuntsic, Bourassa or Dollard, contains colibacillus, the cause of hepatitis. Like my colleagues from Terrebonne (Mr. Comtois), Argenteuil-Deux-Montagnes (Mr. Major) and all those who tabled this project, I submit to the authorities what I have been suggesting since I became a member of this House—dredging the Mille-Îles and Back rivers.

I am aware that this is a local issue but this is one of the rare opportunities when a member of Parliament is allowed to speak about things of real interest to his riding.

City of Laval, which was part of my large riding of Laval before it was divided up and before I was elected in Ahuntsic, has a population of more than 230,000 today. It is the second largest city in Quebec.

The total municipal property assessment amounts to well over \$800 million and taking into account the density of the population on the southern shores of the Back River, on Montreal Island, and adding the population in the constituencies of Bourassa, Ahuntsic, Dollard and Lachine, we get a total of over a million people for an aggregate property assessment exceeding \$1 billion. This only goes to show, Mr. Speaker, the importance of that area and the reasons for my keen interest in that part of my constituency. The low-water levels which elsewhere are considered only as a threat, border on disaster where my constituents are concerned and a great many of them already have left or are considering leaving the river-shore districts. This situation is largely due to the conditions resulting from the pollution of the waters of both rivers and in this wonderful area known for its natural beauties and glorious mementoes of the early days of Ville-Marie, there is a feeling of uneasiness which apparently tends to paralyse any tourist promotion as well as the normal development of this natural water passage from the St. Lawrence to Lake St-Louis, then to Lake of Two-Mountains and into the Thousand-Isles and the Back rivers.

Briefs were submitted to the authorities. In the past, members representing that region felt duty bound to warn the authorities. However, in 1963, in view of the serious situation, a committee on the canalization of the Thousand-Isles and Back rivers was set up and registered on July 10, 1963 with the Superior Court of Montreal.

On the following August 15, a steering committee comprising a president, a vice-president, a secretary, four directors and a legal adviser was created. The federal members of Parliament whose constituencies bordered

[Mr. Rochon.]

the rivers supported the request of 30 mayors of the riverside municipalities. Finally, in October 1963, the federal ministers of Transport and Public Works instructed engineers of their respective departments to undertake the required preliminary studies and report thereon.

In 1964, the Minister of Public Works agreed to meet the authorities of Laval. With these authorities and river-side residents he visited the whole area. He came to the conclusion that for the benefit of the population and in order to prevent an epidemic, it was necessary to dredge these two rivers during the spring of 1965. Following the flood in the western part of Laval, particularly in the city of Laval-Ouest the minister reported to the cabinet that it was urgent to take action in order to prevent a disaster.

During the fall of the same year the new Minister of Transport, Mr. Pickersgill, went further and said: these two rivers will be dredged, because the welfare of an entire population is at stake.

On July 7, 1967, I received the following letter from the Minister of Transport:

Dear Mr. Rochon,

I am pleased to inform you that on June 20, 1967, the cabinet approved the principle of the Grand Moulin Rapids canalization project on the Mille-Îles River.

The project will be undertaken in order to make the river navigable from the Deux-Montagnes Lake to Pont David. A sum of \$1,250,000 is involved.

The Department of Public Works intends to start construction as soon as possible in 1968.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, to stop the progress of inflation, a calamity we believe should be eliminated in the interest of the whole country, the government decided to delay the project and all those concerned understood that, in the general interest, it could wait. There the matter rested until the beginning of the fight against pollution.

Last March, after consultations with Ottawa, the Quebec provincial government—as well as the other provincial governments—decided to make the population aware of the serious pollution problem and on that subject, I quote an article by Mr. André Beauvais which was published in a Montreal newspaper:

● (4:20 p.m.)

Water pollution: Quebec efforts to develop greater public awareness

This year, the Department of Health intends to tackle with greater vigour the water pollution problem.

As early as May, the first phase of a long term program will be launched on a provincial scale with a view to awaken the public to the problem of water pollution.

Continuing in that vein, the riverside residents of the City of Laval as well as those in the riding of Bourassa in Montreal North in Ahuntsic and Dollard, were asked to send water samples to the laboratories of Laval or McGill Universities.

Over 55,000 samples were sent to those laboratories where colon colibacilli were found in almost everyone of