

Oral Questions

Does the Government seriously intend that this important change in Canada's Constitution be settled and concluded before the summer recess? Surely not.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Member wants to make representations to his House Leader, as part and parcel of the negotiations that will take place, I suggest that he do it either in his caucus or through some other format rather than on the floor of the House of Commons.

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● (1425)

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS**UPGRADING OF INFRASTRUCTURES—GOVERNMENT'S REJECTION OF REQUEST FOR FUNDS**

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. Can the Minister explain why his Government rejected so quickly the proposal by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for upgrading public works such as sewer and water facilities in our cities—to be funded in its proposal by the three levels of government—especially in cities such as Halifax and Dartmouth in the Minister's own Atlantic region where 80 per cent of wastes are simply dumped into the surrounding harbour?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, the previous Government abolished the program which led to infrastructure spending in provincial jurisdiction. We are not resuscitating that program. I think the Hon. Member knows that the debt equity ratio of municipalities is about one-third of the federal Government's debt compared to its revenues. We are just not in a position to move further unless there is a particular federal purpose which makes sense.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment suggested to the municipalities that they finance this by increasing their water bills. The President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities pointed out this would cost \$1,000 annually in water rates. In its submission to the Government, the FCM based its proposal on a study done by Informetrica, that any federal contribution would be recovered through increased taxation, lower unemployment insurance and social assistance costs on the 280,000 person-years of work which would be created. Why does the Government not pay some attention to that proposal by Informetrica?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that the municipalities say they do not have the money to invest in water works at a time when they are charging their consumers one-half of what the Americans charge their consumers for water, and at a time

when the Europeans are charging their consumers four times what Canadian municipalities are charging consumers for water. If the municipalities need revenues to invest in municipal works within their jurisdiction, not within federal jurisdiction, they might well be advised to seek revenue from that source.

COSTS OF UPGRADING

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister would advise me how to answer a letter I received from the Mayor of Moncton, New Brunswick, who, to my knowledge, is not a New Democrat. He states, and I quote:

Municipal infrastructure is the foundation upon which all economic activity is built. If our transportation, water and sewer systems fail, so also our economy will fail.

He points out that the proposal would only cost the federal Government \$1 billion a year and would bring tremendous benefits by way of employment and improving the environment.

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the amount the Federation of Canadian Municipalities attaches to the total cost of waterworks within provincial jurisdiction is \$12 billion, not \$1 billion. That is \$12 billion which the federal Government does not have, nor do we have the jurisdiction. It is provincial jurisdiction, not federal jurisdiction. If the provinces want us to pay for works within their jurisdiction, are they going to offer to pay for works within our jurisdiction, for example, airports, national defence and other obligations we must meet with a deficit of about \$30 billion left over from the previous Government?

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THE CONSTITUTION**INCLUSION OF ABORIGINAL RIGHTS**

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. In 1982 we recognized certain aboriginal rights in Section 25 and Section 35 of the Constitution and provided for three federal-provincial conferences to consider the entrenchment of Indian self-government. Would the Deputy Prime Minister assure us that nothing agreed upon today would derogate from those aboriginal rights in the Constitution and that aboriginal rights will be on the list of those matters to be considered in the second round? Would he assure the House of that?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member would share the view that this Government has worked very hard and very vigorously in trying to resolve that particular issue. With one member of the Canadian family left out of the constitutional framework, it has been very difficult