

Private Members' Business

These regional committees in B.C. are part of an extensive commitment to keep the public and all other affected parties informed of developments and to make sure that advice from all sectors of B.C. society are considered. Other efforts include news letters, public meetings, an 800 number, speaking engagements, information brochures, other publications and participation in trade shows.

The BCTC also allocates loans to enable First Nations to fully participate in the process. In other words, it works in partnership with all parties to ensure that the job gets done properly.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, but he will have 10 minutes remaining the next time the matter is called.

It now being 5.30 p.m., the House will proceed to consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

TREATMENT OF MUNICIPAL SEWAGE

The House resumed from June 20, 1995, consideration of the motion that, in the opinion of this House, the government should support the undertaking of a country-wide program of improving the treatment of municipal sewage to a minimum standard of at least that of primary treatment facilities, and of the amendment of Mrs. Guay.

Mr. Bernard St-Laurent (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with great interest that I rise today to debate Motion M-425 brought forward by the member for Comox—Alberni. In this motion, my colleague proposes that the water we use be treated at the primary level instead of being discharged directly into the environment, as is the case today.

In developed and industrialized regions, pollution has altered the natural quality of this valuable resource. Because of growing urbanization and because of the obvious inadequacy of our sewage treatment facilities, we have to worry about the quality of the large quantity of water we consume daily.

Not only is water a necessity of life, but it also contributes to our quality of life. I am very aware of this fact when I look at my riding, the riding of Manicouagan, that borders the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Water is the principal driving force in my region. This natural resource has attracted several industries employing a large number of workers to this area.

Unlike many other vital resources, water has no substitute in most of the activities and processes where it is required, both in industry and in nature. Yet, despite its increasing scarcity and

despite the fact that, over the last few years, we have become aware of the seriousness of the water pollution problem, we have not taken the necessary measures to deal with it.

Everyone agrees that our current sewage treatment systems will have to be modernized. I support the motion brought forward by the member for Comox—Alberni because it is clear that our waste water needs a minimum amount of treatment. We cannot go on thinking that we can discharge sewage directly into our lakes and rivers without harming the environment.

Sewage treatment systems are essential to the social and economic functioning of modern communities. The major part of polluted waste found in water comes from sewage and municipal sewage treatment installations and from numerous industries which use those installations to dispose of their waste.

In the last ten years or so, the growing awareness of environmental issues has sparked considerable interest for the protection of waterways. Provinces and municipalities have therefore been spending tremendous amounts of money to develop protection programs for those resources. Motion M-425 proposes a national program. Yet, it has always been clear that municipalities are responsible for providing drinking water, sewage treatment and waste disposal services.

The motion proposes federal interference in a provincial jurisdiction, which is of course totally unacceptable for the Bloc Québécois. I wonder if the author of this motion is aware of the danger of allowing the federal government to impose its own standards on municipalities.

Motion M-425 proposes that the federal government establish a nationwide program of improving the treatment of municipal sewage to the point of meeting a minimum national standard. In the area of environment, the federal government has always had a tendency to centralize power in Ottawa, supposedly because of the national interest and the need to modernize environmental programs.

Yet, under the constitution, environment is not explicitly the jurisdiction of one level of government more than another.

• (1735)

The courts have declared it what is termed an ancillary power, derived from the areas of jurisdiction allocated to each government. Even before the mid-eighties the government of Quebec, which has exclusive jurisdiction over matters of a local or territorial nature, played a lead role in environmental matters, an area over which it was for the most part responsible.

The federal government was satisfied at that time, as set out in the constitution, with intervening in complementary areas. It was only in later years that it began to interfere in environmental matters. As soon as that happened, duplication and overlap began to crop up increasingly, moreover. This has been perpe-