

Energy Conservation

than a third of the lights were on at that time, and being a reasonable and fair man he would probably admit that there were likely to be a few people working at that time. I understand that he himself works very late at night. Being a reasonable man I am sure he would also realize that there would be cleaning staff involved, so that I think he will see that there has been a good deal of progress.

Not so very long ago the lights at the Taxation Data Centre seemed to be on all night, but I made a personal check the other night and found that better than half of those lights had been turned off. The point I am trying to make is that there has been an important response with regard to federal government buildings. It will still take a little longer because much of the wiring and switching has to be changed, but that is coming.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Who got the contract?

Mr. Gillespie: There were suggestions that we introduced a program last February and have done nothing since. Let me repeat what the hon. member for Algoma said. There are a number of important measures being taken. I am not saying they are all we want to go with, because clearly we will be asking hon. members to take further action, but I think these sorts of measures indicate the kind of lead the federal government is giving on the question of energy conservation.

The federal sales tax on insulating materials was completely removed in the last budget. An excise tax related to weight has been introduced on the largest automobiles, and a 10 per cent tax levied on private aircraft and marine motors of more than 20 horsepower. Insulation requirements have been increased in the building code, followed by Central Housing and Mortgage Corporation, and a ten cents per gallon tax increase, so bitterly attacked by the opposition, was levied on motor gasoline for non business use.

Mr. Stanfield: Shame!

M. Gillespie: I remind hon. members opposite that probably the single most effective deterrent to increasing energy consumption is a higher price. Every other country has found that to be true. The opposition choose not to look at these important truths; they choose to look only at the peripheral.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gillespie: A good deal has been said about speed limits. Last year, and earlier this year my predecessor stated that it would be a commitment of the government to reduce the maximum speed for federal vehicles to 55 miles an hour, and we invited all the provinces of Canada to follow this lead. I think it is probably the single most important move which can be taken at the present time to drive home to Canadian people the importance of energy conservation.

I went down to Washington less than three weeks ago to talk to federal energy administration officials and to ask them what had been their experience. I had heard stories, and many hon. members have heard stories, that there is a federal speed limit imposed in the United States but that it

[Mr. Gillespie.]

is not being observed. Quite the contrary is true; time and again I have run into Canadians who have been down to the United States who have told me that it is being observed, and that while there are surely some pockets where it is not being observed with the same even handedness as perhaps in upper New York state, there are probably exceptions to any policy of this kind.

Generally speaking there is a broad commitment in the United States to the 55 miles an hour speed limit. I have met and talked to a number of the energy ministers of the Canadian provinces, and I was very pleased that the province of Ontario has decided to follow the leads of the federal government and the province of British Columbia in limiting the speed to 60 miles an hour on some expressways and 55 miles an hour on others. When asked my opinion about a 60 miles an hour limit, my answer to that is that it is better than a 70 miles an hour limit. I would have preferred 55, but it is certainly better than 70, and I very much hope that the other provinces in Canada will introduce measures to reduce their speed limits.

I shall be meeting with the energy ministers of the provinces on December 12, and at that time we will be discussing a number of matters related to our energy future. One of them will be the question of energy conservation, and part of that agenda item will be to try to obtain a national 55 miles an hour speed limit across the country.

Before closing I wish just to touch on one or two other items which are important in terms of energy conservation. I should like to commend the Canadian Automobile Association; hon. members may be aware that a very substantial public relations program has been launched by that association. I think it is a very responsible program—and that association has a membership of a million or more motorists in Canada—which is aimed at getting across to them the importance of energy conservation and the various ways they can conserve the energy used by their automobiles.

I have talked to public utilities—not all of them but many—and I have impressed upon them the importance we attach to energy conservation. They have assured me that they have changed completely what had been their program of pushing, selling, and promoting the use of more energy, in favour of programs designed to persuade people to use energy more effectively and efficiently to meet energy conservation goals.

There was some reference to the question of energy research and development. The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich referred to this in his remarks. I share with him the feeling that more has to be devoted to energy conservation. I am sure he is aware, as are other hon. members, that at the present time the federal government is spending over \$100 million per year on energy research and development. A large part of that is for nuclear energy, of course, but it covers a wide range of programs. At the present time my cabinet colleagues and I are considering the list of priorities. I can tell you that energy conservation will be at the top of the list as far as new programs are concerned.