

Supply

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member, but his time has expired. Is there unanimous consent to allow the Member to continue his speech for a couple of minutes?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is not. Therefore, we will proceed with the period for questions and comments.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There was a statement that did take some 20 minutes of our time and we usually add that time to the daily deliberations of the House. Since this is our day, could you take it under consideration that we add the extra 20 or 21 minutes to the day?

● (1200)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will take the matter under consideration and make a ruling later today. Questions or comments?

Mr. Gurbin: I appreciate some of the comments by the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) and we are very grateful to be able to have this debate in the House today so that we can discuss a very important issue of concern to Canadians. This question deserves our attention and we want to consider it very seriously.

I am sure the Hon. Member will appreciate that I have some difficulty with many of his comments. While I would not accuse him of playing politics with the matter, he quite understandably was taking advantage of this debate to attract the kind of attention he might not otherwise get.

My first question relates to the accuracy, consistency and reliability of his comments with respect to his motion on the environment and the toxic chemicals about which we are all concerned. The Member alluded to the comments of the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) with respect to the ability of the Environmental Contaminants Act to clean up the problem that exists in Canadian waterways and the Great Lakes in particular. I suggest it is clear that the Minister of the Environment has never said that that is the only tool at his disposal.

The Hon. Member himself indicated that many of the substances with which we are dealing are almost indestructible and for some time have found their way into human fatty tissue. Chemicals such as PCBs and dioxin in our waterways are particularly difficult to destroy. Most important, these chemicals are bio-concentrated which means that they are building up in our life systems in such things as fish and vegetation in the waterways. This is a long-term problem that has evolved over many years.

The Minister of the Environment has said very clearly that the amendments to be proposed to the Environmental Contaminants Act—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), on a point of order.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, the ten-minute period for questions and comments should be strictly adhered to, and both questions and comments should be brief, so that the Member has time to answer.

This Hon. Member is making a speech!

[*English*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member has already taken three minutes. I am sure that he is just about to conclude.

Mr. Gurbin: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to make sure that the Hon. Member for Davenport clearly understands my question. While he has one point of view, I want to make sure that he understands what the Minister has said to see if he does not agree.

I will attempt to be short in explaining the three critical points on which I would like the Hon. Member's comments. First, the Environmental Contaminants Act is long overdue for amendment. It will address the preventive aspect by placing the onus on the industries to deal with the many chemicals. Second, the changes to the Act will allow for the monitoring of chemicals from their introduction to their destruction. Furthermore, we intend to work very closely with the Province of Ontario—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I regret to inform the Hon. Member that we have already taken more than half of the question and comment period. I give the floor to the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia).

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder that the Hon. Member (Mr. Gurbin) finds it difficult to understand some of the environmental points that have been made. It is not the first time he has had such difficulty.

His first question concerned the reliability of the information. It is information that is contained in the 1985 Report on the Great Lakes Water Quality. It is information contained in the Niagara River Toxics Committee, published in October, 1984. It is information contained in the joint report by the Royal Society of Canada and the National Research Council in the United States of America, entitled "The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement: An Evolving Instrument for Ecosystem Management", which was published in December, 1985. These are documents from which I quoted in my intervention. If that is not reliable information I do not know what it is. It also is the record.

The Government now has a foundation on which to build its action as a result of the content of these reports. In the spring of 1985 the Government promised to take swift action along the Niagara River by the fall of 1985. The Government has been silent and has not delivered. The Government has not commented on the U.S. proposal, put forward an alternative or had the guts to say that it is not happy with the proposal from