

*Adjournment Debate*

United States Environmental Protection Agency, considered this to be a public document. We were told to be patient.

Six weeks later, on November 28, I asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Gurbin) if he could shed any light on the contents of the Niagara Action Plan. Were all sites to be cleaned up? How much money was allocated? What was the schedule for clean-up? Would the waste be destroyed or just contained?

On that day the Parliamentary Secretary said that the proposals for specific clean-up plans were being narrowed down and would be released by the beginning of the year. Now it is the beginning of the year and still nothing has been released. Five million Canadians and some 24 million people, Canadians and Americans, who depend on the water are still no wiser as to the security of their water supply in the future. Why is there this foot dragging? Why will the Minister not practice the open Government so often alluded to by his Party? Therefore, when will the action plan be announced?

At the end of October last year, Occidental Chemicals reached an agreement with New York State and EPA officials to deal with the toxic wastes in the Hyde Park dump. The plan called for Occidental to spend \$17 million to contain the chemicals that are buried there. The plan was released for public comment and the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States is receiving comments until February 25 of this year. It will take them into consideration and submit to the judge any alterations to the plan before it is signed as a court order.

It seems to me that this is an opportunity for the Canadian Government to make strong representations to the EPA on the necessary to excavate and destroy rather than to contain, and to comment on the progress of clean-up of all dump sites, not just Hyde Park.

My second question to the Parliamentary Secretary is: Are we taking advantage of this opportunity and, if so, how?

Finally, the St. Clair River is another piece in this toxic chemical jigsaw of the Great Lakes. The gravity and scope of the situation there is not yet fully known but could present the Ontario and Canadian Governments with a problem on the scale of the Niagara toxic dumps in New York State.

● (1805)

According to the "Pollution of the St. Clair River—Situation Report", released by Canada and Ontario in November, 1985, there are 18 deep wells which have been injected with wastes and seven land fills within Lambton County. If it is determined that wastes are leaking from the storage sites just mentioned, the consequences could be grave. It is therefore imperative that the Government make it clear from the outset that the St. Clair River situation will be dealt with in the manner which the Minister of the Environment and others have demanded from the United States in the Niagara area, namely, that toxic wastes must be destroyed. Attempts to contain leaking dump sites are not good enough, because it would be a repetition of the mistakes along the Niagara River.

In conclusion, it seems that the Canadian Government has an opportunity to show leadership in the cleaning up of the St. Clair River. We have to provide this leadership through our own actions, as Liberal Governments have done on so many other environmental issues in the past, and to demonstrate to our American neighbours that we are prepared to do on our side of the border what we are asking them to do on their side.

I have outlined the reasons for my intervention tonight. I would be grateful if the Parliamentary Secretary would kindly answer the questions.

**Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources):** Mr. Speaker, I looked forward to replying to the Hon. Member because, as some people know—not too many—the action carried out by the Ministry during his brief tenure as Minister of the Environment was negligible. He knows full well that the Government has been working extremely hard on trans-border pollution problems, has provided more action and has got more interest in both this country and south of the border than the previous administration. He knows that the Government has made a very strong commitment to address the problem of toxic contaminants in the Niagara River basin. Also he knows of the very rapid, firm action of the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) on the St. Clair problem. He should be applauding the Government for the action it took, the speed with which it took it, the competence in which it took action and the results of that action. I assure him on behalf of the Minister of the Environment that every precaution will be taken to ensure safety and good water in the Great Lakes by the Government.

I should like to tell the Hon. Member that there are negotiations and ongoing work right now at a very hectic pace within the Ministry of the Environment with our neighbours to the south. A working document was provided to the Minister of the Environment and to Mr. Thomas of the United States EPA when they met in Ottawa last fall and put together the draft action plan.

I think the Hon. Member understands—I forget how long he was the Minister, but he knows that in order to have a good working agreement and to ensure that we take care of and attack the problem it is necessary to have mechanisms which ensure effective meshing of the various efforts on the Niagara. Of course that would pertain to the St. Clair as well. We are confident that this will be achieved as it is at the core of a comprehensive action plan to reduce the amount of toxic contaminants in the river.

It is the intention of the Minister and Mr. Thomas to have a co-ordinated, four-jurisdiction plan—and we are talking about four jurisdictions now—in accordance with the commitments made last May. We expect to announce the details of the four-party plan in the coming weeks. I assure the Hon. Member that every effort—and we are working very diligently on this—is being made to this end.

In conclusion, I reiterate the Minister's commitment to the reduction of toxic pollution in the Niagara River and Lake