

*Environmental Affairs*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** Order, please. I am sorry, but the 10-minute period had expired. Debate. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of State (Mines) (Mr. Fretz).

● (1840)

[*English*]

**Mr. Girve Fretz (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Mines)):** Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to take part in the debate today and to respond to the motion of the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia). I am pleased to speak to this Member's motion and his request that the federal Government consider the advisability of protecting the health of Canadians, present and future generations, by providing for the upgrading of waste water treatment facilities. I heartily agree with him that is an important issue to bring before us today.

I want to address one of the comments made by the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis) who, in reference to the state of the environment report, stated that the report gave the Department of Environment an F on toxics. There was a full release of this information. Never did this Department, the Minister or the Parliamentary Secretary ever attempt to hide that report. We accept and we recognize the terrible record that is here before us. There has been no claim by this Department that we have been perfect, unlike the apparent hypocrisy of the former Minister of the Environment. Never have we made that statement. We did not hide the report. We did not attempt to keep it from the public, the caucus or Opposition Members.

I will tell you why in two words; we care. The Government, the caucus members on this side, care about the environment. We care about Canadians and we care about the future. We care about our children and our grandchildren. That is why we are willing to share that information. That is why we are willing to be right up front and let everyone see the record that is there that, indeed, is less than perfect.

As Hon. Members may be aware, on March 6, 1986 the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) signed an agreement with the Hon. Jim Bradley, Minister of the Environment for Ontario, which renewed the commitment of funds by both Governments for Great Lakes research and clean-up. This is a tremendous step forward. The \$82.1 million agreement respecting Great Lakes water quality is a six-year pact which provides additional money for upgrading sewage treatment plants and for phosphorous control programs as well as for surveillance and monitoring.

Under this agreement, the federal Government has committed \$9.7 million to Ontario alone and to area municipalities it will contribute an additional \$50.4 million to upgrade existing sewage treatment facilities or build new ones. No one knows better than I how important that is.

My riding abuts the Niagara River, adjacent to Lake Erie. My constituents draw their water downstream from Lake Erie.

The residents of Niagara Falls draw their water further on down Lake Ontario. No one, least of all the Hon. Member for Davenport has to tell me the importance of having clean water at our disposal.

● (1850)

Canada and Ontario have a long history of co-operative agreements to control water pollution, which dates back to 1971, when the federal and Ontario Governments signed the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. This most recent pact not only reaffirms but re-establishes the commitment of both Governments to continue to share the cost of pollution control on the Great Lakes.

Another aspect of the upgrading of waste water treatment facilities, and a very important one I might add, is the research into the development of improved technology for the treatment of waste water. Treatment plants, be they industrial or municipal, are facing even more complex problems. As the contaminants in our waste water are becoming more difficult and costly to remove, alternative, innovative and cost-effective solutions must be found.

I had the opportunity recently to visit Environment Canada's waste water technology centre in Burlington, Ontario. I was impressed with the equipment and the expertise there. Departmental scientists are developing and demonstrating innovative processes to deal with waste water produced by both industrial processes and municipalities. Let me cite an example, Mr. Speaker, because I can tell by the animated look on your face that you are interested in this subject. If the waste water from industrial processes can be cleaned up before it is sent to municipal sewers, the sewage treatment plant does not have to be as complex or as costly.

The major theme of the waste water technology centre's current municipal waste water program is that if municipal waste treatment processes can be modified, and wastes can be reused or treated more efficiently by using less energy, the end result will be cost reductions and a cleaner environment. I note that a difficult problem to solve in regional Niagara is finding places to put the sludge. We are working on that, along with Regional Niagara.

Work is under way at the centre on a number of projects to improve municipal waste water treatment technology. For example, on-line monitoring equipment and computer control are being evaluated at a full-scale sewage treatment plant. This technology may provide more reliable control over the discharge of pollutants, while at the same time reducing operating costs and making more efficient use of the treatment plant. We are most interested in doing whatever we can to reduce costs and bring today's high deficits under control.

In another project, the feasibility of converting sewage sludge to oil and a coal-like material is being demonstrated. In many urban areas, sludge disposal is a serious environmental and economic problem. In these and other projects, the