

Human Environmental Studies

Our association suggests that Canada's interest is twofold: first to make a contribution towards the UN University as a whole; and second to establish a regional center in Canada, preferably in Toronto.

Canada's contribution towards the UN University as a whole is expected to be about \$12 million, payable over several years. This is 3 per cent of the estimated total requirement of \$400 million.—(Canada's share of the overall United Nations budget is 3 per cent).

We believe, that if budgetary difficulties should occur, the required funds could come from the already approved allotment for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), which is about \$730 million.

A draft of our associations proposal for a Canadian international component on environmental "missions" is attached. I like to stress that our proposal entails an all-Canadian thought input, even though we like to see the office of the component in Toronto. The financial requirements for this proposal would be \$45,000.00 per year.

That letter certainly establishes the interest in this country, particularly in Toronto, in this United Nations environmental centre.

Finally we had the response by our own government through the then minister of the environment, as follows:

Dear Dr. Philbrook:

Environmental Centre for the United Nations

I have studied the letter which you received from Professor A. P. Bernhart in which he seeks your support for the establishment in Toronto of a centre for environmental problems associated with the United Nations University.

In 1972, Canada voted for the principle of the establishment of a United Nations University. Since then, a Canadian position with respect to our participation in the project has not been determined. An interdepartmental task force, under the chairmanship of the Department of External Affairs, currently bears the responsibility of establishing a Canadian position.

As indicated by Professor Bernhart, the headquarters of the university has been set up in Tokyo. A few months ago Dr. Roger Gaudry, former rector of the University of Montreal, was elected as Chairman of the University Council. The location, throughout the world, of centres associated with the university will be a function of the Council of the University, for which the Council will be responsible to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

● (1650)

With respect to your specific question I am advised that, in terms of intellectual and physical resources, the location of a centre for environmental problems in the Toronto area is feasible. There are, as you know, a number of universities and associated specialized environment institutes in the area. Of these, a number, among others in Canada, receive federal assistance. Further, federal environmental activities in the area include the Canada Centre for Inland Waters in Burlington and the headquarters of the Atmospheric Environment Service of the Department of the Environment.

It should be noted, however, that the desirability of establishing such a centre in the Toronto area may be another question. The interest in such a project and the willingness of the various groups to collaborate in the development of an intergrated program and to accept the additional influx of students will require careful planning and cooperation amongst the institutions involved.

Furthermore, because of the administrative costs, it is almost certain that the Province of Ontario would have a direct interest in the matter and should be included in any further consultations.

I imagine that it is questions of this sort which are being dealt with by the interdepartmental task force considering the whole United Nations University question. In any event, I will ask my officials to pay particular attention to the possibility of establishing a United Nations University centre for environmental problems in the Toronto area.

Yours sincerely,

That is signed by the present Minister of Communications (Mrs. Sauvé). It was dated July, 1975.

[Mr. Philbrook.]

In conclusion, I suppose one wonders why this is not going ahead faster since it certainly seems to be a worthy project for Canada. It would seem to be in line with motion No. 5 proposed by the hon. member for Malpeque. I suppose the obvious answer is simply economics. We have a tight money situation and most countries seem to have restraint programs at the present time, so I think it is a reasonable answer to the hon. member's proposal for this worthy institution. Personally I think it should go ahead. There are several alternatives, and it would be reasonable at this time to accept the necessary financial restraints for such an institution.

Mr. Ian Watson (Laprairie): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be able to contribute to the debate this afternoon. The part of the hon. member's motion of prime interest to me is his reference to the growth of our metropolitan areas and the largely unplanned aspects of that growth which are having an increasing effect on the living conditions of a very large number of Canadians.

The thing that really frustrates me more than anything else about parliament is that over a number of years, having made representations almost since the time I arrived here, I have yet to convince the government that it should be utilizing one power that exists, at least indirectly, as a lender under the National Housing Act. Our cities have grown and expanded enormously since the second world war largely, at least initially, as a result of money lent, to individuals and companies building homes, through Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation under the provisions of the National Housing Act. Had we wished to use this power and not been so fearful of upsetting provincial sensibilities, we could have avoided many of the errors in planning that characterize the suburbs of every city in Canada. Even now the minister is talking about one million new homes, so it is not too late to act.

We should be using these lending powers of ours to insist on basic standards of planning, basic minimums for green space and minimums for recreational facilities. Although we are told this is being done, we are not really doing this yet. There is now a move afoot to apply more pressure on municipal and provincial recipients of lending funds to provide basic standards of planning, but we have a long way to go, it seems to me, before achieving the kind of minimum planning that will guarantee to the future population of Canada the kind of cities and suburbs that are possible if properly planned.

We have heard a lot over the years about quality of life. Quality of life means to me the quality of the living conditions in the places where we spend most of our lives, that means our homes, our communities, and the access between our communities and the places where we work, shop, and are educated.

As far as housing is concerned, I agree that Canadians are probably the best housed people in the world, but what about the communities in which their houses are situated and the access of these well housed people to their work and schools? Ask the people in my constituency who have to wait and choke for two or three hours every morning in the fouled atmosphere of traffic jams to cross the St. Lawrence River into Montreal when they are sitting beside an unused rail line what they think of their quality of life.