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(HANSARD)

Tuesday, May 8, 2001

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 8, 2001

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

POINT OF ORDER

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I like to think that the government has nothing at all against transparency or truth, so I am amazed that day after day it is refusing consent to the tabling of the proof specifically requested by the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada, the one linking the Auberge Grand-Mère with the Grand-Mère golf club.

Once again, I ask for unanimous consent to table this document.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to two petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I

have the honour to present the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and I would like to move concurrence at this time.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

POISON CONTROL

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I have a petition with the names of farmers from across Saskatchewan wanting the government to give them the necessary tools to fight a severe infestation of gophers.

They are calling on the federal government to amend regulations to permit the sale of concentrated liquid strychnine to registered farmers until an effective alternative can be found. Gophers are destroying hundreds of acres of pasture and grain land every year and to a great extent the farmers are powerless to stop them.

The petitioners hope their petition will convince the federal government to relax the restrictions on strychnine poison so that farmers can get the gopher problem under control. We appreciate the opportunity to bring this grave and serious problem to the attention of the House.

* * *

• (1010)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have a number of questions that have been on the order paper in excess of 60 days. I should not have to remind the House that the answers to those questions are very important to individual members of parliament.

Supply

Under Standing Order 39 we are allowed to put four questions on the order paper. The questions I have on the order paper, which the government has been very slow and reluctant to answer, are questions that have to do with HRDC.

I have been on my feet on numerous occasions but it basically boils down to the fact that if the government fails to answer those questions, it restricts my ability to do my job. It is as simple as that. I would like the government to recognize the problem and do something about it.

The point I made last week was that if a cabinet minister wanted those same questions answered, they would be answered within 24 hours. I and everyone in the House knows that the full resources of the government would kick into action to get answers to very important questions. However, when it is on this side of the House, nothing happens.

Madam Speaker, I would request that you, just out of curiosity, examine the record. Many members of parliament are not using questions on the order paper. The reason is that they get frustrated and just simply give up waiting for the government to answer those questions.

The point of this is simply that it restricts our ability to do our jobs in the House when the government fails to co-operate with opposition members of parliament.

Madam Speaker, please do what you can to ensure that the government responds to those questions on the order paper.

Mr. Derek Lee: Madam Speaker, one would not be critical at all of the hon. member for urging a prompt reply to his questions. However, he is a frequent intervener on this subject and we might as well use the time, in reply to his intervention, to point out again to him the provisions of Standing Order 39(5)(b) which states very clearly that if the answer to a member's question has taken more than 45 days, he or she has the right and ability to transfer the matter for debate at adjournment proceedings. That is a remedy of which the hon. member may wish to avail himself.

If he does not do that, I assure him that the government is doing everything in reasonably prompt fashion to obtain answers to the questions that he put in writing. My records show that there are 10 questions out of approximately 50 where the reply has exceeded the 45 day window and his 1 or 2 questions are among those 10.

I acknowledge that the reply has taken more than 45 days but I do not accept the motive alleged by the hon. member that the government just does not care about providing answers. It does and we will.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1015)

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—NATIONAL DRINKING WATER STANDARDS

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should act with the provinces and territories to establish enforceable national drinking water standards that would be enshrined in a Safe Water Act.

He said: Madam Speaker, before I begin my remarks I want to inform the House that I will have the privilege of sharing my time in this 20 minute spot with the right hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Essentially what the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada is advocating is that we pull out one plank of the election platform we presented to Canadians in the election campaign of this past November, and that was to enshrine into law national drinking water standards. What we would be doing is sending a signal that wherever one resides in this country, the quality of drinking water to be consumed would be the same whether one is in St. John's, Newfoundland, St-Jean, Quebec, Fort St. John, British Columbia or even here in the House of Commons.

I would like to read the motion into the record:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should act with the provinces and territories to establish enforceable national drinking water standards that would be enshrined in a Safe Water Act.

Water is a finite resource. There is no substitute for it. Yet until recently, this precious necessity did not share the same level of public importance as other limited resources.

Tragic events in Walkerton, Ontario and more recently in North Battleford, Saskatchewan have highlighted the consequences of taking this critical resource for granted.

The public confidence of Canadians has been shaken. We have learned the hard lesson that water is the simplest tool for distributing infection and can create massive deadly epidemics. Yet today, a year after the Walkerton tragedy unfolded, there are no new federal laws enforcing minimum water quality standards in Canada.

In 1990 the former minister of the environment, the hon. Lucien Bouchard, launched Canada's green plan, an ambitious framework to help make Canada an environmentally friendly country. In the ensuing framework for discussion on the environment document that was produced from that green plan, the Progressive Conservative government identified three gaps in Canadian environmental

protection that needed to be addressed. Canada was weak in its ability to protect species at risk or wildlife and there was a need to upgrade our existing pesticide legislation, which is still over 30 years old, and to provide a safe drinking water supply for all Canadians. I point out that all three of these issues have yet to be addressed despite eight years of Liberal government.

In contrast, when we look at the record of activities of the Progressive Conservative government, which introduced the green plan I just spoke of, it was the Progressive Conservative government that had the courage to negotiate an acid rain protocol with the Americans. That same government led the international world in 1987 in what was called the Montreal protocol, which led the international community in the banning of ozone depleting gases.

Perhaps one of the hallmarks of that government was the introduction of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, our principal piece of legislation for the control and use of toxins within our environment. At the time it was categorized as a very pioneering bill.

However, we still have some gaps that need to be filled. Today, some 10 years after that framework was released, the Liberal government has yet to pass a significant piece of new environmental legislation. It has merely renewed existing bills.

Prior to being elected in 1993, the Liberals flagged a very real concern to Canadians: that the protection of drinking water was paramount. I will now read from a document which I would be pleased to share a copy of with the House. It was produced on June 23, 1993, by the then House leader David Dingwall on behalf the then opposition leader, now the Prime Minister of Canada, and the then whip, now the public works minister, a member of parliament from the province of Quebec. In it they flagged quite clearly that it was paramount to ensure drinking water safety.

They even went on to produce a chart that they called Tory environmental mismanagement. They said there was no legislation with respect to drinking water safety. That was their position.

• (1020)

Madam Speaker, I am sure you have actually read some of these red books and other documents which we may actually want to refer to. As we go through the historical references, perhaps one of the notes that is most shocking is on Bill C-76, a bill that was introduced by the government to protect drinking water in Canada and then reintroduced. The press release produced by your government, which I am sure you are familiar with, stated:

This Act will provide enforceable national health standards for all materials that come into contact with drinking water. . . This Act goes a long way to maintaining and improving the health of Canadians.

Supply

The Government of Canada is now saying it would not want to make a foray into what it considers to be perhaps provincial jurisdiction. The Progressive Conservative Party has always been very respectful of the jurisdictional boundaries that actually exist in this magical country we call Canada, but it is very revisionist to actually take that perspective in light of what was said only a few years back.

We know that the hallmark of the Liberal Party of Canada is revision. That is characterized by the issue of free trade. It fought us tooth and nail on it in 1988 and 1993 and now embraces the concept. We welcome the Liberals on board on that particular aspect of public policy.

With no new legislation on the books, the Progressive Conservative Party believes that the time to act is long overdue. All Canadians deserve access to a clean and safe water supply. We made this commitment in our last election platform.

Our nation is fortunate enough to claim one-fifth of the world's freshwater resources. Thirsty nations throughout the world are trying, unsuccessfully, I might add, to buy our precious resource. Instead we preach conservation and preservation and admirably invest millions annually into CIDA projects that improve water treatment, sewage, irrigation and pollution control systems. Yet here at home Canadians find it shocking that we cannot guarantee to our own citizens the security of our water supply.

The federal-provincial subcommittee on drinking water, a branch of the federal-provincial advisory committee on environmental and occupational health, currently defines national guidelines for acceptable drinking water quality. However, these Canadian guidelines are just that, guidelines. They are not legally binding and they provide inadequate national protection for our drinking water.

[*Translation*]

What the Progressive Conservative Party is attempting to demonstrate is that Canadians have concerns about the quality of their drinking water. Recent events in Walkerton and North Battleford have added to those concerns. My Conservative colleagues and I are here, therefore, to propose concrete solutions. All Canadians need to be assured of the quality of the water they drink anywhere in Canada.

All my life I have had great respect for the diversity of our country. All during my political life I have had, and continue to have, respect for the jurisdictions of the provinces and of the federal government. I was present when Bill C-20 was passed. I voted against it. I would like it to be known that I will respect other provincial areas of responsibility, such as education.

*Supply**[English]*

There are certain issues that actually transcend jurisdictional boundaries. In the perspective we advocate, we understand that there is a shared jurisdiction between the federal government and the provinces in the delivery of drinking water and the setting of guidelines or, what we are now advocating, standards for safe drinking water. We believe that these standards must be enshrined in law in order to guarantee quality drinking water throughout the country. In addition, these standards should be revised on an ongoing basis.

• (1025)

Unfortunately, studies reveal that Canadian guidelines are far behind the U.S. in their level and breadth of protection. There are substances prohibited by the Americans that do not even appear in Canadian guidelines. In some instances, permissible levels of some identified dangerous substances are set much lower in the U.S.

One such example is cryptosporidium, the substance that is suspected of killing three residents in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. The U.S. has both cryptosporidium and *E. coli* mandatory standards. Canadian guidelines address only total and fecal coliforms, which includes *E. coli*. The U.S. EPA requires filtration treatment for cryptosporidium while Canada has no mandatory treatment for eliminating this parasite from our water supply systems.

Jurisdictional matters do indeed complicate the control of our drinking water supplies, but this is not a barrier we should fear. We have to pull together regardless of partisan lines so we can protect our drinking water.

That is why the Progressive Conservative Party has selected very benign language in its motion. It is not partisan. It is not provocative. It clearly states that we have to be respectful of provincial and territorial jurisdictions. It clearly infers that this is something all members of the House should embrace and support. However, even though there are different jurisdictions, this should not deter the federal government from its leadership role in maintaining public health and safety in order to protect drinking water.

It is important to note that the Progressive Conservative Party does not encourage overlap and duplication but rather seeks to harmonize its efforts with the provinces and territories while creating a minimum national standard for all Canadians. If there is a provincial law in place, the federal law need not apply.

I seek the support of all members of the House for our party's motion.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member who just spoke and

the opposition party that has introduced this motion should be congratulated because this is an important issue and we should debate it.

I will put a very quick question to the member for Fundy—Royal. He is proposing national standards brought in by the federal government, which I presume he means should be legislated standards. There is resistance in Ontario to any imposition of federal standards in just about any area of provincial jurisdiction. Is he proposing that we should bring in legislation setting national standards for water quality and provide penalties that will force the provinces to comply?

Mr. John Herron: Madam Speaker, my response is threefold. First, the language in the motion says that we need to act with the provincial and territorial governments. Second, I wish to inform the hon. member that I have been in contact with Elizabeth Witmer's office. She is currently the environment minister in the Ontario government. I told her office what we were advancing in the House of Commons and received no opposition in that regard.

Also, we are looking to the federal government to provide some leadership and act with the provincial and territorial governments. I am very appreciative of the hon. member's response to this. He says it is a very important question. Given that our party wants to do this in a collaborative fashion with provincial and territorial governments, I genuinely hope the member would support our motion.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I too want to congratulate the member and his party on this initiative. I have been a supporter of this debate for a long time. Using an opposition day to bring this issue to the floor of the House is something I totally support. I will be voting in favour of this motion.

• (1030)

I also bring to the attention of the House, because we are not the only House that is seized with this issue, that Senator Grafstein has Bill S-18 on the floor over there, an act to amend the Food and Drug Act for clean drinking water.

Using the language of the member about non-partisan collaboration, let us get on with it. It may be a consideration, and I do not know the logistics of this, that the House could come together, because there already is proposed legislation, and somehow take the work of the great senator, bring it over here and pass the bill immediately.

Mr. John Herron: Madam Speaker, I compliment the member for the tenor of his response. The work of Senator Grafstein has been incredibly constructive and is doing what private members' bills should do within the House and the Senate. That is to be

provocative and advance issues of public policy that require debate. Senator Grafstein should indeed be congratulated.

I am not sure of the road map and the proposal of Senator Grafstein in terms of how he wants to accomplish this end. We can perhaps debate that later. The spirit of what Senator Grafstein and the Progressive Party want is essentially the same. However we obviously have to include provincial and territorial governments in that equation.

I again applaud Senator Grafstein for his initiative.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Madam Speaker, I begin by congratulating my colleague from Fundy—Royal, not only for introducing the motion but also for the leadership he has shown on the environmental issue throughout his time in the House of Commons, working obviously as these recent questions have indicated, with other concerned members of the House of Commons of all parties.

In the interest of urgency on the bill, I would like to move an amendment to the bill. I move:

That the motion be amended by inserting the word “immediately” after the word “act”.

That would simply allow us to move forward more quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The amendment is in order.

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Madam Speaker, when we speak about clean water, we are speaking about the most basic expectations of our citizens. This is not about some rare disease that may strike strangers in some far off place. This is about what our children drink every day in every part of Canada.

For most of our lives, most of our citizens have believed that our water would be clean, that it would be safe for our kids, for elderly Canadians and safe for all of us. However the water that Canadians drink today is not as safe as it should be. It is not as safe as it could be. That has been demonstrated by two separate tragedies, one last week in North Battleford, Saskatchewan and the other a year ago in Walkerton, Ontario.

For years experts have warned of the need to improve Canada’s water safety. As long ago as 1990, as my colleague indicated, the green plan of the then Progressive Conservative government warned of “important gaps in the federal government’s environmental legislation, particularly in regard to assuring the safety of drinking water”.

I was part of that government. The minister who launched the green plan was Lucien Bouchard. Ten years later those legislative gaps still exist. The Liberal government has sadly not treated environmental safety as the priority it should have and now the headlines report that Canadians are dying because of drinking water.

Supply

There is a broad new fear that environmental health standards have fallen. The fear is real because two things have happened together. First, there are more threats to health. Second, there is less protection for health.

• (1035)

The money that governments spend on protection has been cut and the factors that could contaminate water have grown. What is certain is that the sources of danger will grow as communities become more crowded, as infrastructure crumbles, grows old and is not renewed and as new elements enter the environment. If the threats to citizens grow so too does the responsibility of governments. These are matters which most citizens cannot protect on their own. Society has a clear responsibility which it is the duty of governments to exercise.

[*Translation*]

Undoubtedly, that issue compels us to ask ourselves, first, which government has to act and which one can take action.

It is a provincial jurisdiction in the first place, but the federal government also has a responsibility, which evolves from its more specific but equally important jurisdiction. As for the municipalities, they are called upon to manage several areas related to water quality and distribution.

If those governments co-operate and work hand in hand, we will have adequate water quality and be able to maintain it. However, if the various levels of government fight between themselves over matters of jurisdiction, the quality of our water will be affected and our children will suffer from it. Still more deaths will make headlines in the news media.

So let us be clear with regard to jurisdictions. Let us be as clear as we would wish our water to be. The first jurisdiction in that area belongs to provinces, but the federal government, under its criminal law power, is responsible for health protection and public security at the national level.

At present, there are only guidelines and these vary from province to province. In concrete terms, it means that the life of your children might be more at risk if they drink water in your province than that of children living in another province. We need to set common standards. We must ensure they are respected and we must do so by respecting both the rights of the provinces concerning their jurisdictions and the rights of the citizens concerning their health. This is the objective of this motion.

We must start by recognizing that there are too many deaths, that the guidelines are too weak and that this is a shared responsibility. Thus, the different levels of government must work together at establishing standards and ways to ensure these rights are being respected. Only then will these weak guidelines transform into

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standards that the citizens can rely on. Where the jurisdiction is provincial, the means to ensure the respect of these standards may be provincial in nature.

No one is more sensitive to constitutional issues than I. I have spent a major part of my life trying to find ways for the different levels of government of working together in a spirit of mutual respect.

Because of these efforts, we have been able, for example, to launch the Francophonie. We have invited the provinces to participate fully in negotiations toward a free trade agreement. We have entered into an agreement on acid rain, as well as other environmental initiatives. Even through all these processes, we have firmly respected provincial jurisdictions, as well as the interests of the citizens of this country.

Today, when the issue is the quality of the water that our children are drinking, are we going to hide behind the veil of jurisdictions or are we going to try to find solutions to allow governments to co-operate for the well-being of our children?

[English]

The motion respects the federal partnership. It allows enforcement. It increases protection at a time when citizens feel protection is gradually falling away. It forces the federal government, entirely within its limited jurisdiction, to stop hiding and to start leading. It gives society a chance to send a strong signal through an enforceable commitment to clean water, an enforceable commitment supported on the floor of the House of Commons of Canada.

• (1040)

I very much hope that Canadians who are concerned about the issue will take this opportunity to move forward on the motion and move Canada toward a situation where there will be no more deaths at North Battleford, no more deaths in Ontario and no more risk of death from the thing that Canadians should be able to count on above all else, which is the safety and the cleanliness of our drinking water.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the hon. gentleman a couple of questions with regard to his eloquent speech.

He defended very eloquently the rights of provinces to be autonomous in their own areas of jurisdiction. Of course that is not what the motion says. I think the hon. gentleman may have reconsidered how he wanted to phrase his words before the House when he realized the Bloc Quebecois would not be supporting him.

Frankly, I look at the federal record on water in areas that are within the federal government's jurisdiction and it is deplorable. We do not see that being addressed here. This is one area where the federal government could act effectively, forcefully and could improve a standard which quite frankly is the worst in the country, not the best. The federal government has shown no leadership. On

the contrary, the federal government has been the worst offender in this regard.

I will make the point that will allow me to raise the question. Last Friday it was reported that Matthew Coon Come had observed that one in eight aboriginal communities, areas where the water supply was under the federal jurisdiction, had unsafe water. A 1995 report indicated that one in five aboriginal communities had substandard water of the 171 reserves across the country.

Another area that is under federal jurisdiction is the—

Mr. Dennis Mills: What is your question? It is a speech. Come on, a question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): There will be one Chair in this place. I have permitted a lot of members at least a minute to put their question, so let us show the same respect to the hon. member. Would the hon. member please put his question since there are other members yet to speak.

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, the other area under the federal jurisdiction where there are problems is on military bases, for example at Valcartier. The federal government has not taken action and did not take action for years with regard to pollution affecting the town of Shannon in Quebec. We see a federal government which has taken no leadership action.

Why does the hon. gentleman's motion not focus on setting a federal leadership role in areas that are directly under the federal government's jurisdiction so that it can lead by example. Why is that absent from his motion?

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Madam Speaker, any fair reading of the motion will realize that it provides plenty of latitude for the kinds of legitimate questions with regard to federal jurisdiction raised by the hon. member. I come from the tradition on the environmental issue of the acid rain treaty. I knew when we were going to the United States to get agreement on the acid rain treaty that we had to have clean hands at home.

There is no doubt that the federal jurisdiction we are talking about is of two kinds. One is a specific jurisdiction under the criminal law power. That is a narrow jurisdiction, but it is there and it is well established. I know the hon. member, as someone who studies these things, recognizes that that jurisdiction is soundly founded and must be protected in the national interest.

The other responsibility is for federal leadership. This is the parliament of the national government. This is the parliament that is able to persuade legislatures everywhere else in the country to assume their responsibility. Can we do that more effectively if our hands are clean and if the conditions are better on reserves and in federal lands? Of course we can. If there is going to be a serious attempt by the national government to try to encourage that kind of

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action on all fronts, in all the places where jurisdiction or responsibility lies, then obviously we have to exert that kind of leadership.

I welcome the hon. member's interest in these specific issues. I hope he will not confine that interest to those Canadians who live on reserves or those Canadians who live in Valcartier. I hope he will share an equal concern about Canadians across the country who today are more at risk than they have been before because the communities are growing and pressures are growing.

Not just me, but Canadians in general, the people who would have preferred not to be ill or who would have preferred not to have seen fatalities in Walkerton or in North Battleford, need stronger standards.

• (1045)

They count on the hon. member. They count on all of us. This motion provides an opportunity for the federal government, acting within its jurisdiction, to provide the leadership that may change and improve the standard of health and cleanliness of Canadian water.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): On just a point of clarity, Madam Speaker, I wish to understand from the member who just spoke: Does he mean that if we set national standards we should force compliance on the part of the provinces?

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Madam Speaker, the way I would approach that and the way I have approached it in the past is to work out agreements with the provinces.

The hon. member can shrug, and I understand that, but I have seen both ways work. I have seen agreements reached when the federal government was prepared to go some distance on its own to clean its own hands going into those discussions.

I do not believe we get very far by pretending there are not provincial jurisdictions and riding over them. I think that becomes counterproductive. It gets people's backs up. It makes solutions less possible.

I believe in a phrase used by a former leader of the hon. gentleman's party. I believe in co-operative federalism. I think it is the spirit of the country. That is the kind of federalism that I would like to apply in this instance: getting agreement, forcing agreement by the force of persuasion, by the force of example, and then writing it into law.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, building on the point that the Canadian Alliance member touched on and as the right hon. leader of the Progressive Conservative Party stated, if we use our jurisdiction on reserves to create a model water quality agreement then by example that could have an effect on provinces and municipalities and respect the provincial juris-

isdiction about which especially the province of Quebec is concerned.

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Madam Speaker, that is a very constructive suggestion. I believe it also falls within the ambit of the motion now before the House.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, does the right hon. member not think that the water problems we are having are just the tip of the iceberg, an iceberg that probably started surfacing about 50 years ago when it came to the decline in Canada's infrastructure?

Truckers are telling us about bridges that were built in 1955 which they are afraid to drive over. We have sewage treatment plants that are archaic. We have water treatment plants that no one seems to know whether or not they work.

Does he not think that this is just the tip of the iceberg, one that should have been addressed probably 30 years ago and now we are just starting to see the repercussions from this?

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Madam Speaker, the short answer to that is yes. The deteriorating infrastructure problem is a serious complication. It has been aggravated in recent years because the drive to expenditure reduction has meant that investment which should have gone into infrastructure to keep things up to date has been delayed. We are paying the price for that.

The only thing I would add is that there are other factors here. More people are moving to small communities. There is greater diversity of commercial activity in various communities, as the hon. member would know coming as he does from Red Deer. That has environmental implications. There are changes in the various environmental factors that can affect water, but there is no doubt that infrastructure is one important element of this and has to be addressed.

I would add in closing there needs to be a law on the books that encourages governments to act and not let these issues slip away. That is why we would propose to bring together the provinces and federal government to establish standards and then to enshrine them in a law on which Canadians could count and any government could not ignore.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I first want to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Toronto—Danforth.

The motion by the representatives of the Progressive Conservative Party provides an opportunity for a valuable debate not only on the quality of water, but on the organization of the Canadian

Supply

federation and on the allocation of responsibilities among the various levels—the federal government, the provinces and the municipalities—in the management of a resource as vital as water.

The opposition motion proposes national standards that would be not only directives or recommendations but requirements enshrined in a safe water act.

Nothing separates us from the Progressive Conservative Party in our concern for the need to protect a safe environment and the right to safe and quality drinking water throughout Canada. I consider it a fundamental right, which we must help guarantee, at all levels of government.

When we see the tragedies and problems occurring in Walkerton, North Battleford and other regions in Canada, I think it is high time we took a look at water quality, of course, but also at the way we manage our environment and our most precious heritage, which helps us survive each day, namely, our air, our water and our land, the various contaminants and categories of waste.

A debate on water quality is of interest to all Canadians. It gives the government an opportunity to make known its share of the responsibility in the area.

Let me first say that our government has promised to increase funding for research into the effects of toxins on our health, including research on endocrine disrupting chemicals, on heavy metals that pose special risks for children, on specific toxic substances and on the cumulative effects of all toxins on our health. This is a commitment that we made, and is one that we will fulfil. It is a commitment that will have a concrete impact on water quality across the country.

Moreover, Health Canada will continue and enhance work on the drinking water guidelines. These guidelines are developed based on lifetime exposure to a specific contaminant, thereby addressing concerns with cumulative effects.

Health Canada's safe environments program acts as the technical secretariat to the federal-provincial subcommittee on drinking water, the entity responsible for the development of guidelines for Canadian drinking water quality. The guidelines establish health based limits for contaminants of drinking water. They are meant to apply to all drinking water supplies, both public and private, whether the source water comes from a lake or river, or from a well.

The subcommittee, which includes representatives from all provinces and territories as well as the federal government, is a very good example of federal-provincial-territorial collaboration in place to ensure the safety of all Canadians.

What is Health Canada's role in this subcommittee? Health Canada develops the scientific documents used by the subcommittee to establish acceptable concentrations for contaminants in drinking water. Health Canada provides provincial and territorial

governments with the best scientific data on biological, chemical and radiological contaminants found in drinking water.

Over the past thirty years, this system has worked well and Health Canada has developed a strong working relationship with each of the provinces and territories. Health Canada provides the provinces and territories with the best scientific data available and co-ordinates the flow of information across the country.

These guidelines are used in a number of ways. They are truly the cornerstone for all drinking water quality across Canada.

• (1055)

The provinces and territories use them as the benchmark for their own enforceable standards, guidelines and objectives. Each province and territory has developed its own method to incorporate the guidelines to best fit its needs.

Some provinces have developed regulations, based on the guidelines, while others require that all national health-based guidelines be met.

Guidelines are also used at the federal level with respect to areas of federal jurisdiction, such as in connection with first nations, or on federal lands, and so forth.

These guidelines also set the standard for the quality of bottled water and water used in food production.

These guidelines are very much a work in progress: as new research, monitoring data, analytical methodology or treatment processes become available, existing guidelines can be and are re-evaluated and kept current.

By definition, these guidelines are not mandatory. However, I would like to take a moment to tell the House that to date this method has been very largely effective in safeguarding the quality of our drinking water. Canada is the second largest country in the world, with an incredibly diverse geography, and there are many differences between the regions with respect to source water quality, availability and quantity.

The guidelines developed by the joint committee must be applied appropriately in the various provinces and territories in order to be effective. Risk management in this case is best done by the people who know their territory best.

The federal government acknowledges that the provinces know their water best and that they can use the federal guidelines in the most effective way.

If the federal government were to mandate that every province follow the guidelines, line by line, or face stiff penalties, some provinces would spend a lot of public money testing substances that are not even found in their territory.

By leaving it up to the provinces to interpret the guidelines in the way that makes sense and is appropriate for them, the federal government allows them to make the most appropriate risk management decisions, and also gives them an opportunity to assume their responsibilities in making the most judicious use possible of taxpayers' money by not testing for substances that might not even exist in their territory.

It bears repeating that the provinces know their geographical territory best, and are best left to control the quality of their drinking water.

In summary, I wish to say that the safety of Canadian water requires a multi-layered approach, which includes the protection of the source water the effectiveness of the water treatment process, the training of treatment plant operators, the distribution of the treated water and the safety of the materials that come in contact with drinking water throughout the entire process.

All these elements cannot be the responsibility of just one level of government or of the federal government alone. A division of responsibilities has become established over the years, which is also consistent with our constitution and which requires the provincial and municipal levels to play a role, with the support, as I mentioned, of the federal government through the work being done by Health Canada.

I am proud of what we have been able to achieve in collaboration with the provinces and territories. I believe the steps we have all taken in light of the recent tragedies will ensure we maintain the safety of our drinking water supplies for all Canadians.

[*English*]

I would ask for unanimous consent of the House to move the following amendment:

That the motion be amended by replacing the words "to establish" with the following: "respecting their jurisdiction to ensure".

• (1100)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. John Herron: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The tenor of the language that we utilized in the shaping of the motion was to provide a high degree of flexibility.

In keeping with that same tenor and trying to make the issue as non-partisan as we possibly can, I ask the member if a subsequent member could reintroduce the amendment while we have a chance to talk among our colleagues and reflect upon the wording.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): As it is, I would like to advise hon. members that there is a motion already on the floor that was moved by the right hon. leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

I will have to take this amendment under advisement because we cannot have two motions to amend a motion on the floor at the same time.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to compliment the member for Fundy—Royal on bringing this issue to the floor of the House of Commons today.

As many members will know, over the last few months a number of us have been seized with this issue. We have been trying hard to work on terms of reference that would be acceptable to all parties for a special committee of the House that would move this debate forward. We want to make sure that the security of our freshwater, the quality of our drinking water and all facets related to water are dealt with in a proper fashion.

I was particularly reassured today, and it is the reason I will be supporting the motion, that all members who have spoken to the motion have said that it is not a partisan issue. It is an issue on which we all have to come together. We all have to figure out a way to make sure that laws are put in place to ensure the quality of our drinking water.

It is very important that we first begin by acknowledging the work of Senator Grafstein in the other place. He tabled Bill S-18, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act dealing with clean drinking water. I believe it is at second reading right now.

I appeal to all members, their staff, other legislators, journalists, environmentalists and people interested in the issue to get a hold of Senator Grafstein's bill. I am sure the research he has done in this area would be deemed acceptable to the point where we could move the bill from the Senate into the House of Commons. Together we could create an historic moment where the Senate and the House of Commons, in the interest of all Canadians, would work together to ensure that we have clean drinking water in every part of Canada.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health suggested an amendment to the main motion a few minutes ago that talked about making sure we are respectful of provincial jurisdictions. It is a very important amendment which hopefully the member for Fundy—Royal will accept. It would be a tragic day in the House if we could not get together, because there was some unease by the Bloc Quebecois and other members who felt we were trying to interfere with provincial jurisdiction.

• (1105)

That is not the essence of the motion. We understand the provinces jealously guard their areas of jurisdiction and that we

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had a tremendous disaster in terms of water quality in Ontario. The world knows about it. We are very sensitive because on an issue like this one Canadians do not want for a moment to be criticizing one another.

We must get together to resolve the problem. We must make an effort to put forward the collective will of all parties of the House to make drinking water better for everyone in the country and perhaps even a template for the world. It would be awful if through a few words the spirit of good will were to fall apart.

It is very important that all members support the amendment and that we respect provincial jurisdictions. It is no secret that traditionally I have a reputation for being a passionate centralist and interventionist. This has been my political background. The issue is so fragile and important that if we are to create a national will all of us will have to put a drop of water in our wine. We will have to bend a little and park some of our traditional philosophical views. Nothing is more important than the quality of our drinking water.

As a nation we have a very special trust not only for Canadians but for the rest of the world. I hope the debate will lead to the next part of the discussion on water technologies. As a nation we have some of the best water purification technologies on the planet. We have a responsibility to take that technology and make sure other parts of the world that are disadvantaged get to share it.

The whole area of water purification technology will end up as another issue for debate, which is very important. On this issue we cannot just think about our own constituents and our own country. We have to reach out to the rest of the world and share the technology.

Over the next little while another issue will be water and our trade agreements. There is no mistake about it. In 1995 I spoke to Mr. Nelson Riis' private member's bill banning bulk water exports. I supported his bill, but when we get into the area of water eventually we come to issues that are explosive and sensitive for us and the House of Commons must deal with them.

I hope the spirit of today's debate will continue. When our House leaders get together tomorrow I hope they will put the special committee of the House on track so that it can move ahead on these issues. We need to deal with them in a constructive way by bringing in some of the best minds in our country and in other countries to talk to us about all facets of water.

I should like to make one final point which I touched on in my question to the right hon. leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. It has to do with water quality on Indian reserves.

• (1110)

The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has done a tremendous amount of work on this issue. I believe, without

causing any problems with our provincial or municipal friends, that if we started working on the quality of drinking water in an area where we have constitutional jurisdiction such as on reserves this would be a great beginning.

If we could have the best quality of drinking water on our Indian reserves, it could be a template or a model which other municipalities or provinces could voluntarily pick up. It would save some of the potential for disagreement or interference.

I appeal to the House that we urge the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to put that file on a fast forward track to a jurisdiction where we have nobody holding us back. We should make sure that our reserves have the best drinking water in Canada and then we could build from there.

I congratulate the hon. member for Fundy—Royal on the motion today. I hope that it leads to a long and vigorous debate on all facets of the security of freshwater in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Madam Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth for his recent conversion to the virtues of fully complying with the constitution. This is a great novelty, and I do hope it reflects a new Liberal tendency.

As we are dealing today with drinking water, the Liberals are suddenly determined to fully respect the areas of provincial jurisdiction.

Is the hon. member giving us a scoop and telling us that the government is now dropping the infamous millennium scholarship program so vigorously condemned, particularly by Quebec but also by other provinces, as interfering in provincial responsibility for education? Is he announcing, for the Prime Minister, that the Romanow commission on health care is a thing of the past, that it is over and done with, that the government will not interfere with Quebec's health care sector? Should we now conclude from the member's speech that these are the new tendencies of the Liberal Party, the party in power?

I would like the member to explain his position. Members will agree with me that it is surprising to hear the member for Toronto—Danforth repudiate the federal government's interference and its centralizing power in areas under provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Dennis Mills: Madam Speaker, my conversion is limited to water. My interventionist passion continues unchanged as far as other issues are concerned.

[*English*]

I would give a very specific example. I do not want to take away from the issue of water that we are dealing with today. On that issue

I will bow to the provincial jurisdiction the Bloc Québécois guards so dearly, but I will not bow and I will intervene with vigour in any province that is not living up to its requirement to provide more affordable housing.

• (1115)

Water is too fragile an issue. I have had a conversion and I will bow to the provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I would ask the hon. member if he does not think the issue of drinking water is serious enough to warrant an all party committee to examine it. This would include not just drinking water but all aspects of water, everything about it. Is it not time we put the interests of Canadians ahead of party interests?

Mr. Dennis Mills: Madam Speaker, I totally support the view of my colleague, who is an educator, a biologist and the chief environmental critic for the Canadian Alliance.

I hope the House leader of the Conservative Party, the House leader of the Canadian Alliance and our own House leader will come here tomorrow and say that now is the time to move forward on the security of our freshwater. All the goodwill we can muster here today can be a moment of special hope for all Canadians, not just on drinking water but on all aspects of water.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Madam Speaker, I find it incredible to hear the member state that only water is sufficiently important for standards to be set and provincial jurisdiction to be respected, including that of Quebec. This is incredible. Besides, there is nothing more important than water, and it is basically the jurisdiction of Quebec.

What I would ask the hon. member is whether he believes this is a matter of respecting jurisdictions by calling for standards that, while possibly different, will respect provincial jurisdiction, and will Quebec or any other province not be forced in any way to adopt standards that may not even be any better than its own? This is already the case in Quebec and besides, Bernard Landry is already preparing to bring in a new drinking water bill and regulations far superior to what they want to establish as standards here in Canada.

[English]

Mr. Dennis Mills: Madam Speaker, this gets me into trouble from time to time in the House. If someone in the House comes up with a good, constructive idea that will make life better for Canadians I do not care where the idea comes from. If the premier of Quebec has the model for drinking water we will look at it. Maybe it will end up being the model for all of Canada.

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There can be philosophical differences on certain issues. If I understood the motion of the member for Fundy—Royal, the best formula or plan for drinking water should become the national standard regardless of who proposes it. One either opts in or one does not. If the province of Quebec has the best standard then Ontario and the rest of the country should follow it.

Mr. John Herron: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Obviously I am passionate about this issue. I would seek unanimous consent of the House to rescind the amendment put forth by the right hon. member for Calgary Centre and to permit the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health to table another amendment.

• (1120)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. member is asking for a withdrawal of the amendment to the original motion that was moved earlier. Does the House give its unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Amendment withdrawn)

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I seek unanimous consent to move the following amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended

(a) by adding the word “immediately” after the word “act”; and

(b) by replacing the words “to establish” with the words “respecting their jurisdiction, to ensure”.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. parliamentary secretary has moved an amendment. Is there unanimous consent for the hon. parliamentary secretary to move this amendment to the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Amendment agreed to)

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster. It is fitting that we talk about this important subject today. We should have been talking about it a great many years ago.

Canada is looked upon internationally as a pristine, pure, clean place. However Canada is sliding and has been sliding for a considerable time in terms of infrastructure. This is true of more than just water, but water is what we are talking about today.

We have general regulations but do not enforce them. Canada has no standard for water safety. Nor do we understand whose responsibility it is. As a result we saw the Walkerton incident, the North Battleford incident, and I am sure we will see a great many others.

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Canada is sliding into third world status when it comes to water. It is safer to drink bottled water than tap water in Canada. Both sides of the country are dumping raw sewage into the ocean. That is not a G-8 phenomenon; it is a third world phenomenon. We put our garbage into landfills where they seep into our water table. It is a time bomb waiting to explode. It will cost us a fortune in the future to take care of those garbage dumps.

Canada has thousands of toxic waste sites. Our roads and bridges are decaying. Our health care system is rated 23rd out of 29 by the OECD. Our dollar is now worth 60 plus cents. We are suffering from a brain drain. These are symptoms of what is happening to our country, a country of which we are proud and for which we came to Ottawa to fight.

This is the tip of the iceberg. It is the canary in the coal mine in terms of our infrastructure problems. We need a vision and an action plan. We need a government that is not afraid to show leadership.

What has the government done? It likes to stay in the centre and appear shocked that we have a water problem. It likes to pass the buck and blame someone else. When I questioned the government about the 5 and 6 year old girls who were forced to visit their sex offender father in prison, the justice minister told me to go to the province because it was its fault. The province told me to go to the feds because it was a federal prison.

That is called passing the buck, and Canadians are sick and tired of it. They do not care whether an issue is federal, provincial or municipal. They want it fixed. Ultimately the government throws money at the problem. It throws money at infrastructure. What do we get for that money? We get golf courses, statues, canoe museums, ski hills and fountains in the middle of rivers. We need our sewage, water and garbage problems taken care of. That is not what we are getting.

The government has put aside \$4 billion for water between now and the year 2005. Little or none of the money has gone to communities. Most of it seems lost in the bureaucracy. Municipalities say they need \$16.5 billion to address the water problem.

• (1125)

What are the responses? Everyone cares about health. When we talk about water, air or garbage we are talking about people's health. If there is one thing people care about more than anything it is health. It does not matter how many material things one has. Without health one has nothing.

What do we need to do? First, we need to co-operate with the provinces and territories. The people do not care who deals with the problem. They just want us to deal with it. The federal government's job is to show leadership. Let us get rid of the turf warfare that seems to plague the whole issue and most other issues in government. Let us show leadership. Let us show that we care about the issues that affect Canadians.

Second, let us do a complete water inventory. Let us look at our aquifers, find out what we have and make a map of them. Let us see if we are in a positive or negative position in the recharge of those aquifers. Let us evaluate the water sources in the country. Let us look at the contamination levels of our water tables. That is where we get into landfills and that sort of thing. Let us look at watershed management. Let us work with the provinces. This is not a turf war between provinces. It is about fixing a very important resource, our water.

As the hon. member mentioned, we will need to talk about the whole issue of water export. The south west U.S. needs a lot of water. In Libya, Mr. Khadafi has built a \$32 billion pipeline that is 1,900 kilometres long and 5 metres in diameter. He is using it to pump water out of the Sahara Desert. If they can pump water out of the Sahara Desert we had better believe that someone in the south west U.S. will say why not pump it out of Canada.

Let us at least know what our resource is. Let us talk to Canadians and ask them what they think about the issue. Let us not put our heads in the sand and be afraid to deal with difficult issues such as water. That is exactly what we seem to be doing and that is why Canadians are so frustrated.

Third, let us set standards. Let us work with the provinces and territories to set standards. Let us set the bar high. We are a G-8 country. We are a highly industrialized country. If we cannot set the bar high what country can?

We talk about water technology. We are selling water treatment technology to Beijing that we have not even used in Canada. We have 12 to 15 companies selling technology around the world for sewage and water treatment but we do not use it in Canada because we cannot afford it or are not committed to water quality.

Let us change that. It is negligent that we did not set and enforce standards long ago. It is government negligence. Who cares whether the federal, provincial or municipal governments are at fault? It is negligence on the part of governments not to have done something.

Fourth, we need money for infrastructure. That is always a tough one. We need to train people and acquire technology. Where do we get the money? I have been here long enough to think I could find it within the budget of planet Ottawa. So much waste goes on here in terms of unnecessary programs that do not help people that we could list page after page of it. There is money for important issues like health, water, sewage and garbage. The federal government should show leadership in working on the problem.

Lastly, we need leadership. Canadians are looking for environmental leadership. Environmental issues are not unique to one province or region; they are a universal Canadian problem. Who better to take leadership on such an important issue than the federal government? I urge the government to take leadership on alternate

energy, water, sewage, garbage and clean air. I have been working on the Fraser Valley situation at Sumas and the power project. I am shocked how little concern the federal government has about air problems that are potentially going to hurt that area.

• (1130)

With respect to the Sydney tar ponds, Elizabeth May is sitting out there on a hunger strike. We have all kinds of these toxic sites.

We need to develop in this place a vision and a co-operative approach for Canada. Let us fix this environmental concern: today water; tomorrow all these other issues.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I quite agree with the previous speaker that the infrastructure program is not delivering federal money directly to this type of infrastructure, sewage or water treatment. The reason is the infrastructure programs has always been set up so the municipalities have the primary decision making on how the money will be spent. If a municipality decides to infrastructure money on their arena for example, or in my riding on a nature path, instead of on sewers or water treatment, then always the federal government has bowed to the right of the grassroots, shall we say, to determine how federal money is spent.

Is the member suggesting that perhaps we should deviate from this practice, we should turn our back on it and propose that the federal government impose or require the municipalities and the provinces, for that matter, to spend money, the money they should be spending in co-operation with the federal government, on clear drinking water?

It seems to me, Madam Speaker, you cannot have it both ways. We cannot say that the federal government is not doing its job, if the decision making is left to the provinces and the municipalities and they are not making the right decisions. Surely the answer is for the federal government, if it is using federal dollars, to impose upon the provinces and the municipalities to spend money on good water for Canadians.

Mr. Bob Mills: Madam Speaker, there is something really wrong with that approach. Impose or force are the words being used. I am talking about words like co-operate, understand and work with. That is how we do it. We need a new approach to federalism to make it work, not the forced, clamped down and tie the provinces up. That is what we have had for so long.

Let us face it, it is not very sexy to say that we will build a new sewage treatment plant, or that we will change our landfill site or whatever. However I believe more than anything, if we sit down with the provinces they will do what is right. What is right is to protect the health of Canadians. That is what they want us to do.

Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Madam Speaker, once again from another party we are hearing the argument, as we always do when concerns are expressed about jurisdictions and when we are looking out for Quebec's interests, that we are raising party differences and being militant. That is not true.

The jurisdiction is ours. Underground and surface water is indeed the property of Quebec or the provinces. Enough of these accusations of being partisan just because we want certain things or do certain things. That is not true.

What I am saying is that what we are doing right needs to be looked at. Quebec already has in place the strictest standards for drinking water. As hon. members are aware, we have been working to improve those regulations since June 19, 2000 and the bill has almost reached the cabinet stage. The final version has been drafted.

So we do not want to hear any more about our not being concerned about water quality, or not looking after it properly. Perhaps there are some places where the job is not being done as well as it might be, but the responsibility is there. This is another attempt by the federal government to trample over provincial jurisdiction, no matter for how noble a cause. It must be known that water quality is the responsibility of everyone, Quebec included.

How can the hon. member again suggest such an incursion, especially since he comes from a party like the Canadian Alliance? I am sure his province too has programs or regulations. Areas of provincial jurisdiction must be respected. Let the necessary transfer payments be made and let us stop cutting back on the funds that have to be passed on to the municipalities.

• (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Mills: Madam Speaker, as well as turf wars, we have to get rid of the paranoia that is involved. We have to start talking about what is good for Canadians. What is good for Canadians is that water needs to be pure. We have lots of heavy duty restrictions in Alberta on water quality. I believe we have one of the best in water quality, but I would hope that any Albertan politician would be prepared to sit down with members from every other province and try to improve the whole situation.

Why duplicate bureaucracy province by province by province? Why duplicate research or duplicate development of technology? Why would we do that? We are one country. We should be working together to fix the problem, and that is dirty water.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to salute the member for Red Deer who has taken an early lead on this issue over the last few months, and even before that

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with his history as a biologist. I believe he touched on a very important point in his speech when he linked health with this issue.

Could the member say a few words on whether or not he believes that linking the issue of health with clean water and food might be the way we could capture the imaginations of all members in the House and that this issue should be put on the front burner.

Mr. Bob Mills: Madam Speaker, environment is linked to everything. It is linked to agriculture, it is linked to health and it is linked to trade. It is linked to everything we do because we must have a pure environment in which to function. Let us put as paramount importance the health, welfare and safety of Canadians. We have to do that.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I rise today as the MP who covers the area of North Battleford where we are having our latest outbreak of problem water. I will read the motion that my colleague from Fundy—Royal put forward for people who have just joined us. It states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should act with the provinces and territories to establish enforceable national drinking water standards that would be enshrined in a Safe Water Act.

When I look at this motion, I have a certain amount of trepidation in voting positively for it. People at home are crying out. There is a demand and a need for safe water across the country.

We have a myriad of standards at this point. There are over 79 guidelines in the Canadian drinking water quality, 54 of which are health based, 17 are based on aesthetics, which is colour, taste and so on, and another 8 have a combination of the two. As I said, I talk about this with some trepidation. This is a provincial jurisdiction. We really have to get beyond the politics and look at the end of the day to what is best for the common good of ordinary Canadians who are demanding safe and secure water supplies across the country.

There is a myriad of examples where there are problems. Senator Grafstein has a bill in the Senate at this time. He has identified 700 communities, and he says there are probably more, that have problems with water. At any given time there are 5,000 communities across the country that have boil water advisories out.

We have to look at the concentrations of livestock and some of the weather related problems. Part of the problem in North Battleford is that the river content is very low at this time. Compound that with the sewer pump that is on the wrong end of the town and there is a recipe for disaster.

A tremendous amount of studies have been done. Currently we have national standards but they are not binding. The problem as I

see it is that there is a tremendous disconnect between the standards we have and the testing that is required.

The problem with the testing is that it is very expensive. The procedures are very costly. The fancy name is cryptosporidium, which is the little bug in the water in North Battleford. Testing for that requires tankers of water to be taken to the provincial lab, which is 300 or 400 kilometres away. That is done on an ongoing basis. It is cost prohibitive.

The other option is to have a chemical engineer or a biologist on staff, which of course for a community of 15,000 again is cost prohibitive. There has to be some sort of national, provincial and municipal co-operation.

The Minister of Transport made a comment the other day. He stated "The government believes the improvement of our drinking water supply and sewage treatment is an utmost priority." That is what he said. The health minister, in a comment to my question to him yesterday in this place, said that there was nothing more important than public safety, that we really had to spend money on our crumbling infrastructure and that \$56 million had been allocated to Saskatchewan.

• (1140)

To replace the sewage plant alone in North Battleford, we are looking at \$20 million. That is a third of the total allocation to Saskatchewan. It will handle the output for 15,000. There is roughly a million people in Saskatchewan, so members will see that the \$56 million will be a couple of dollars short and probably a day or two late in this instance.

There are a couple of heavy weights at the cabinet table saying that they realize there is a problem. It really begs a question. Moneys have been allocated to the Canada infrastructure program with the focus on water and sewer. We have a tremendous problem with crumbling infrastructure in water and sewer related areas. One member cited the problems on first nation reserves. He is absolutely right. We see that at home on the reserves. However it is also hitting our towns and communities that pay huge taxes are looking for security in their water and sewer supplies.

We are not seeing it happen out there. As the federal government cut the funding on the health and social transfers, that got off-loaded to the provinces. What did the provinces do? They cut support and so on to the municipal governments, the lowest level of government, which led to problems that we see today. They cannot do the testing that is required because the dollars are not there. Staffing has been cut, and it has been a compound action all the way down. I guess we all share in the disgrace in our safe water supply.

We are being asked today to support the idea that the federal government should get into the business of clean water. That is an argument unto itself. If we look at what federal governments have done over time with health care, employment insurance and other programs like that, we see that they have become bureaucratically heavy and have not delivering the germ we need out there in the real world.

Clean water is and will continue to be a complex issue. We have geography. We have climate. We have floods and all sorts of things that happen. We need access to source. Then we have the crumbling infrastructure. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities said we need \$16.5 billion just to get everybody back to a benchmark that would give us relatively safe water and sewage handling. The whole Canada infrastructure program over three years is \$4 billion. That will not even supply maintenance.

We will have to take a lot harder look at this issue. Government spending is all about priorities. We saw an announcement of \$560 million to the arts. Then people say that they need safe water. Where do we suppose they vote? Which one would they ask for? We have a long gun registry that has eaten up \$600 million, and we do not have safe water. Which one would the ordinary citizen want to put the money into? It is all about priorities.

The impact of the water crisis in North Battleford goes away beyond money and regulations. People on the street are concerned about their health and the future safety of the water supply. There is a problem out there about when it will be safe. When the people who were in charge when the problem hit say the water is safe, will these people take their word for it? Probably not. A whole supply system has to be flushed out and that can only be done after rigorous testing has been done at both the sewage end and the pump intake end. There is a combination there of wells and surplus water that is used.

There has been a tremendous outpouring of support for North Battleford's situation from across the country. A lot of other communities, which were in that same situation to a lesser degree, have come forward with ideas. As was mentioned before by my colleague from Red Deer, tremendous gains have been made on the applications of cleaning up our water supply. We are marketing those across the world. If North Battleford wants the upscale, high tech equipment, it will have to go to Beijing to buy it from a Canadian source. We just do not seem to have that communication system in this country which puts the buyer and the seller together. In a lot of cases it is very cost prohibitive.

There are a couple of options available to clean up the cryptosporidium that is in the water in North Battleford. One involves a complete ultraviolet light filter system, which is very expensive and high maintenance. It needs to be maintained on almost a daily basis because of the volume of water that would go through it. The summer capacity is like 3.4 million gallons a day, so that adds to

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the problem. The system is very dry right now, so it could even go higher than. That is the average.

Other people have come forward. Canadian Tire did an excellent job of getting bottled water to the people. The line up has been as long as two kilometres and those folks have risen to the challenge. They have committed to 1,500 gallons a day to be brought in. They have given fantastic support to a small community. The Canadian Tire store is probably the best loved store out there right now. I really commend it for its efforts.

• (1145)

Culligan has stepped up to the plate. It will ship in skids of water at its cost, including cost of the water, freight and everything. The only thing Culligan wants is for the province to waive the enviro charge, which would be about \$1,200 on what it is planning to ship in. I was on a conference call yesterday with the new premier, Lorne Calvert, the mayor and the council, and I am sure the province will step up to the plate.

Everyone is looking for solutions. We are way beyond trying to condemn anyone. We need to find the answers and move along with that.

The crisis over water in Canada is becoming a crisis over government. People are looking to their municipalities that provide these services. They then look to their provinces and ask them for their support. Lastly, they look to the federal government that made the decision to make the huge cuts in health and social transfers. They are telling the federal government that the cuts were for the deficit, which is gone, so we should now prioritize some government spending.

Canadians want the government to look at putting money back into safe resources like water and sewers. They want the infrastructure system, which is so sadly lacking across the country, to be built up again. It is not systemic to one particular area. Every province has problems. No one is blameless. Five years ago we were slashing funding and now it is time to step up to the plate and put some of it back.

We have been asked today to support the idea that the federal government should get into the business of clean water and the safety of supply. I guess in a vacuum where that does not exist someone has to come forward. I have a real problem voting for the federal government to get into a situation like this but of course the money rests with the federal government.

What we are looking for today is the federal government to commit the \$20 million that will be needed in North Battleford to bring its sewage system up to standard so it can get back to doing ordinary business.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on behalf of all of us here, our thoughts are with the hon. member and the challenge he faces as the federal leader for the community

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right now in dealing with this issue. In my humble opinion this is precisely an area where the national government must address the emergency immediately.

I want to remind members about the foot of snow we had in downtown Toronto about three years ago. Our mayor declared a national crisis and called the Prime Minister to ask for the army. Within hours the Department of National Defence was plowing the streets of Toronto. I think there may have been eight or ten inches of snow on the streets and everyone thought this was a great national crisis.

I believe we are sensitive about intervention and trampling on rights of municipalities and provinces but, in a case like this, I do not think it is inappropriate for the municipal leaders to reach out to the local member and to the national government to ask for help. I think as members of the House of Commons we should all be there.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Toronto—Davenport for his intervention. He is of course on the record as trying to spearhead a national drinking water committee. I think it would be very important to do that. I think it should be an all party committee. I think it must confer with the provincial ministers, the Federation of Municipalities and so on.

It is time for the drinking water concerns to be addressed in a systematic fashion, not an ad hoc series of programs. We need to look at the big picture, break it down into components and address each one of those: the sewer, the water distribution system and so on, and it needs to be done through research and development. It is also very important to stress the co-operation and conditions that would be placed on provincial jurisdictions. This is their area of expertise and they really need to be brought to the fore. I know my colleagues from Quebec will certainly stress that issue, and I fully support that. The federal government is really trampling on provincial jurisdiction in doing this but let us take a look at it in a systematic way.

• (1150)

The member mentioned the snow storm in Toronto and the help it received. A couple of years ago, when an ice storm hit this region, lower Quebec and so on, the federal government was there. If we look at the floods in Manitoba and other areas of the country, we see that the federal government had a role to play.

I would ask the members opposite today to keep crisis and disaster in mind as my community of North Battleford applies for extra funding to get its water back under control.

A new sewage plant has been committed for the year 2003. We would like to bring that forward by a year or a year and a half. The problem we are seeing is that the green funds that have been announced are a little tough to access when the forms are not out

yet. They are a little tough to administer when the guidelines say that anything planned needs to have the planning done, the site selection done, the environmental assessment done, the contract let and the building built and tied into the system in less than a year. That is physically impossible when we look at all of the concerns that have to be addressed.

Let us have a look at those regulations. North Battleford sits in the middle of a large agricultural area. It is certainly aware of federal government programs, such as AIDA, and how difficult they are to manage and maintain. It is also aware of the green funding. However, when it looks at the funding it sees it as a public relations spin that really does not address the issue in a practical or common sense way.

We need to get beyond the partisanship and the politics and address this across the country. We have a lightning rod in North Battleford. We had one in Walkerton. We need to seriously look at this issue.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite was the first one so far in the debate who has said that the national standards should be binding.

One of my problems in the debate, as I have heard it thus far, is in Ontario the provincial government withdrew from the programs that provided free water testing for Canadians and withdrew from many other programs that guaranteed good water for people in Ontario.

Should we, when we consider legislation for guaranteeing clean water for all Canadians, be considering ways in which we can prevent provinces withdrawing their support for clean water when they have the responsibility to provide the funds to maintain clean water?

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Madam Speaker, I guess the point that is being made is withdrawing funding; kind of a carrot and a stick attitude. I think we draw more flies with honey than we do with vinegar. Certainly no one out there on the ground wants to destroy the water system that feeds their families, friends communities and so on. They all want to do a good job.

When we talk about the free testing that was available, I guess there is testing and then there is testing. It is like doing a litmus test and doing a couple of things for specific areas in the water. The problem is we have gone way beyond that with a lot of the pollution and so on that we are seeing generated.

We need tests for this crypto. However, as I said, it takes tankers of water on an ongoing basis to a provincial lab. The costs are just prohibitive. We need to somehow come up with ideas where the testing can be refined and done in a way that is affordable.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak to this motion by my Tory colleague pertaining to an issue of great concern: our drinking water.

First, I will read the motion, and then we can develop together the whole theme of drinking water. The motion reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should act with the provinces and territories to establish enforceable national drinking water standards that would be enshrined in a Safe Water Act.

First, I would like to say that we are not against high standards for the monitoring and quality of drinking water. It is all the more essential in the light of recent events, such as what happened in Walkerton or what is going on right now in western Canada, or even the risk of contaminant migration on federal lands for instance.

Take military bases like Bagotville or Valcartier, where, according to some Department of National Defence reports, the contamination could have a major impact on the individual wells of residents in municipalities like Shannon and La Baie, in the Lac-Saint-Jean area. I think this is a matter of concern both at the Canadian level and at the Quebec level.

● (1155)

We agree about national standards, and I remind hon. members that on June 19, the environment minister announced a regulatory project, currently before Cabinet, to tighten standards on the quality of drinking water in Quebec.

It is therefore a priority not only in Canada, but in Quebec as well. Water has long been a matter of concern to Quebecers.

Need I recall the major symposium we held in Quebec in December 1997, where environmentalists, academics and industrialists met to discuss the question of water and drinking water, of course, and the whole issue of Quebec's water resources, how to promote them and how to manage them more effectively in order to protect public health and the environment and to ensure better municipal management of this resource.

This symposium, held in Montreal, led to key findings. The first conclusion was that Quebec needed to establish a policy on water for itself. That was fundamental. It was so fundamental that the whole issue of water was re-examined a month later in Quebec by the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement, which we call the BAPE. In May 2000, after considerable public consultation, it issued a report that provided clearly, on various matters, that Quebec should establish a water policy in the near future.

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The wish was also expressed, and I mention this because it also concerns the issue of water, that the issue of water be considered in the free trade agreements, that water not simply be considered a commodity and that it be excluded from trade agreements being negotiated, such as that of the free trade area of the Americas.

There is another aspect to recall. Moreover, Quebec adopted its own water preservation act. That act, which is currently in effect and which was unanimously passed by the Quebec national assembly, specifically seeks to preserve and protect drinking water and to include this protection in an act, not a safe water act, but an act on the preservation of our drinking water. Again, this legislation was unanimously passed.

I mentioned that we support national standards. Why? Because, as I said earlier, Quebec has already proposed a number of measures through draft regulations tabled in the national assembly, on June 19, 2000. These measures, which basically seek to improve those already in effect in Quebec under the water regulations passed in 1984, would ensure the effective management of drinking water, while always keeping in mind the protection of public health.

These regulations were adopted in 1984 and in June of last year the Quebec government announced amendments and draft regulations. What is the purpose of these draft regulations? First, they are aimed at improving turbidity standards to ensure that the particles in suspension in our drinking water are of acceptable quality.

In a few months, Quebec will adopt, and I am absolutely convinced of that, standards that are twice as strict as the current Canadian standards. This is quite something, considering that some people think that Quebec does not manage its water properly and that its standards are less strict than elsewhere. Yet, we have standards that are twice as strict as the Canadian ones.

● (1200)

The standard for acceptable turbidity will be reduced from five to 0.5 NTU the year immediately following the coming into force of the regulation. The new proposed standard would therefore be twice as strict as the Canadian recommendation for the quality of drinking water, which is, in the other provinces, the same as the standard applied by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

First, with these draft regulations, we will put into place stricter standards, in terms of turbidity as well as quality. These standards will be twice as strict as Canadian standards.

We will also increase the number of substances that must be assessed through sample testing. The number of substances to be assessed in sample tests will be increased from the current 46 to 77. Consequently, more substances will be subject to tests.

We must recall that in certain municipalities, tests are presently conducted, for example in waterworks or individual wells, for

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certain substances only while others are ignored. Nitrate is one example. In many sample tests, the level of nitrate is not analyzed in standard tests to assess drinking water. The number of substances assessed in Quebec will increase from 46 to 77.

Moreover, and this is significant, these regulations will provide for mandatory controls, which will mean more frequent sample testing.

Need I remind the House that, when samples are taken in Quebec, for example when *E. coli*, which is well known from the Walkerton case, is detected, would we have one of the most stringent sets of regulations requiring that municipalities be notified rapidly in order to ensure that public health and safety are safeguarded and that people are well informed. We will therefore be increasing the number of mandatory controls both for *E. coli* and for other substances.

Also important is the frequency of testing. As we discovered in the cases of Shannon, La Baie and the Bagotville base, it is not enough to take samples annually.

It is essential to ensure that if a contaminant enters individual wells, which is most often the case, being a rare occurrence in water supply systems, we can increase the frequency of sampling. This is what will be accomplished by the draft regulations which have been introduced in Quebec and which will be adopted in a few weeks or months. The number of samples taken will be increased to eight a month from two a year. This sampling will be mandatory. The frequency will go from the present two samples a year to eight a month. This is the provision in the government of Quebec's draft regulations.

We had water quality regulations in 1984. We will improve on them with draft regulations which can be described as innovative. They are the most stringent regulations a province can enforce. They are so rigorous that, even though the quality of water in Quebec is considered to be the best in Canada, Quebec has decided to improve them.

• (1205)

When I say that Quebec has the best quality of water, I refer to what the Sierra legal defence fund has said. This environmental organisation, which is not an advocate of industry, has given Quebec the highest mark, ahead of all other provinces, in terms of the severity of its requirements regarding drinking water.

On a scale of A to F, Quebec got a B, like Alberta. Nova Scotia got a minus B. I will not mention the others but I will only talk about Quebec. This environmental organization, which is well known and very rigorous in terms of its evaluations, recognized Quebec as having the best quality of drinking water in Canada.

Another important aspect is the issue of infrastructures. This is fundamental. We cannot raise our environmental standards if we do not have operational sewer and water supply systems to treat water effectively. This is fundamental. I will simply refer to the case of Montreal.

A few years ago, the city of Montreal published a report. It was a green book on the evaluation of the sewer and water supply system. According to this report, and I quote:

At present, the city estimates the operation costs associated with the management of drinking water at \$118 million and the costs associated with the treatment of wastewater at \$83 million.

This was for the city of Montreal alone.

Those costs did not take into account the spending on system improvements. However, the present condition of the system would not necessitate spending of \$1 billion but rather between \$157 and \$225 million.

What we are saying is that the federal government must act as quickly as possible within the existing infrastructure program. However, this is not going to be enough in view of the fact that the sewer and water treatment system of the city of Montreal needs to be improved. The system needs to be improved to ensure there will be no leaks.

If we develop drinking water quality standards, while our sewer system is leaky and is not working properly my colleagues know what I mean, because we have evaluated the cost of a municipal sewage system malfunction, then the outcome would be contamination of the groundwater and the drinking water would inevitably be contaminated.

The Union des municipalités du Québec and the mayors have all stressed the need for adding to the envelope earmarked for water infrastructure renovation. We need concrete action to get the federal government to invest more in infrastructure improvements.

Another aspect concerns the entire issue of crown land contamination, which has a connection to water quality. In recent weeks I revealed that two military bases are the sites of high levels of contamination: Bagotville and Valcartier.

• (1210)

Reports released under the Access to Information Act clearly indicate that the land at Bagotville is contaminated with nitrate, which is liable to end up in the individual well system of nearby municipalities. I am not making this up, I am not being alarmist, I am merely quoting what the National Defence reports say.

This demonstrates that it is all very well to have standards and laws but if the sites are not decontaminated immediately there are health risks. The risks of exposure to nitrate are high. Exposure to nitrates in drinking water can lead to what is termed blue baby syndrome. Action must be taken, therefore.

On the base at Valcartier, not one but a number of sites are polluted. The Jacques-Cartier River was for many years a munitions depot. This situation inevitably creates problems. At Shannon, there is a very high risk that this pollution will migrate into the wells of some 30 homes. The federal government must therefore do something about this and manage its own land before it tells the provinces what standards they should adopt, especially since Quebec's standards are higher than what the federal government wants to recommend.

Quebec is setting standards for itself that are higher than what the government of Canada is recommending. It is not decontaminating its land, which is polluting the drinking water wells of cities, and it wants to tell us what to do. I think the provinces must be respected. If Quebec wants to establish tighter regulations, can it do so? Can the government honour Quebec's areas of jurisdiction?

As far as I know, water is a provincial matter. It is especially insulting for a province that has standards imposed on it to have the federal government taking the lead in setting these standards. It is rather insulting for a province.

People wonder what business it is of the federal government. Should it not get on with managing its own land? Should it not control the quality of the water on its military bases? That is the issue. No, the federal government prefers, generally, to create a law and standards and tell the provinces what is to be done, when it are not about to give lessons.

In closing, I will say simply that we need higher standards on the quality of drinking water. Clearly, stricter regulations are required, but provincial jurisdictions must be respected, especially when the provinces are the leaders.

[English]

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member from the Bloc Québécois made excellent comments in his speech today. I was born and raised in Saskatchewan and my heart goes out to the families who lost family members and to everyone in Saskatchewan over this issue.

Since I was elected in 1997, I have been arguing very strongly for full funding of basic infrastructure, such as roads, water and sewers. The tragedies that we see happening now are due to the fact that small towns and cities cannot tax their people enough in order to build the infrastructure that is required for basic human needs. Clean water is certainly one of those needs.

• (1215)

What does the member believe the priorities should be? There are many examples. I believe that federal and provincial governments should not be in the business of deciding who should or should not be getting government money for business. They

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should be dealing with what the public needs, and that is basic public infrastructure.

The massive use of moneys for gun control is an example. We also had an example in Manitoba where a person was paid \$15,000 to hang up dead rabbits in the trees south of Winnipeg as an artistic endeavour. That was bad and the people of Manitoba complained. This year that person received another \$5,000. To me that is not priority spending.

Does the Bloc member believe that public infrastructure needs more money? We know we have an infrastructure program in Canada right now partially funded by the federal government. Should the level of funding from the federal government not be increased from \$3 billion to \$4 billion for public infrastructure?

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, I am in full agreement with the findings of my colleague from the Canadian Alliance.

We should indeed increase the infrastructure budget. Our position on this has always been clear. We should be the voices of the municipalities in the House. We should ensure that the federal government puts in the money that is needed in infrastructure.

The experience has been tried in Quebec. If we set higher water quality standards, municipalities will see their costs go up. Public policy choices will have to be made. Setting standards is not enough. We need the means to enforce them.

That happens very often in the environment sector. A prime example is the Environmental Protection Act. We have some fine legislation, but we do not have the investigators and inspectors to enforce it.

Three things are needed. First, we must improve our infrastructure system to ensure that there are no leaks, as I said earlier. Second, we need to improve water quality standards in Quebec and other provinces. Third, we should provide whatever resources are needed for the optimal implementation of these standards, in other words, provide the money to hire inspectors and investigators.

[English]

Mr. Dennis Mills (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too acknowledge that the member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie gave a great speech.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health acknowledged, through the amendment, that we would be respecting jurisdictions as the debate moves forward.

The member just said that we need to speak for municipalities in the House. Does that mean the Bloc Québécois would support the motion that is on the floor of the House today? Given his experience on Quebec's special high standards, his acknowledge-

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ment that infrastructure is needed, that we do have some challenges to meet on our crown lands and that these issues do need the full light of day, would the Bloc Québécois support the motion? We would need the co-operation and support of the Bloc Québécois to make this happen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, that is somewhat unbelievable. They are saying that Canada needs Quebec to adopt national, higher standards. The hon. member for Bourassa knows very well that in Quebec we have the highest standards and the best drinking water in Canada. If the Canadian government wants to adopt higher standards, to copy the standards we have in Quebec, nothing is preventing it from doing so. We will present it with the draft regulations so it can have them adopted wherever it wants.

• (1220)

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie to explain or clarify his thoughts. When he says that Canada could copy, is he talking about Canada or the provinces?

Second, he talks about adopting Canadian standards? Could the hon. member also indicate whether this would not lead to conflicting expert advice? Would this not be a new case of duplication?

I would like the hon. member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie to answer these questions.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member understood correctly. I am talking about Canada, including the provinces. I did not talk about the federal government adopting standards.

Canada, through the provinces, could indeed adopt regulations similar to those passed by Quebec in 1984. It could also adopt stricter regulations regarding water quality, including standards. Would this result in conflicting expert advice? The important thing is to have high standards, both in the provinces and in the lands under federal jurisdiction. I am thinking, among others, of military bases.

If standards as high as those that Quebec is about to adopt were in effect on military bases, we would probably not have a risk of nitrate contaminating the drinking water wells of the town of La Baie, and of water contamination in Shannon.

The federal government is free to adopt standards for federal lands, and the provinces can certainly adopt the same draft regulations as the Quebec government. What will be the result of such measures? We will finally have quality drinking water which will probably be classified as B water, as is currently the case in

Quebec. We will not merely have standards, we will have better drinking water and a better quality of life.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Mills (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member. Would he be supporting the motion today? Yes or no.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, I think I made myself clear earlier. This is not oral question period. Government members seem quite frustrated because I am not answering their questions to their liking, but we have to put up with this every afternoon in the House of Commons. Now, Liberal members can see how frustrating this can be. What I said is that if we could talk—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise in support of the motion, although with some reservations. I will be sharing my time with my friend from Winnipeg North Centre on this very important subject.

I must admit that I prepared some notes and I thought about the motion overnight. I did so with a great deal of concern at a somewhat personal level because I have some close friends who live in Walkerton. I have followed that issue and that incident very closely out of concern for their health and for the health of that community. When we heard the story break last week about North Battleford, it was déjà vu.

• (1225)

I could not help but recall it was a little over a year ago that the government and governments across the country had their warning. We had all the scientists and all the experts say to us that this would happen again. Now the citizens of North Battleford have been the next victims.

With regard to the motion, I must admit that I do not have a great deal of hope it would not be repeated in more communities across the country. We have known for 30 to 40 years that our infrastructure programs and support programs for both water and sewage treatment have not been funded properly. They have been deteriorating to the point as seen now in these two communities.

They have led to the deaths of citizens in Canada. It is not limited to just those two communities. We have had regular and continuous warnings right across the country, including in the

province of Quebec, in spite of my friend's protestation of how good the systems are there. It will only get worse before it gets better.

Last year in Ontario 274 communities had boil water advisories. Last weekend 37 Saskatchewan towns were being advised to boil their water. These are all after Walkerton.

The need for government action is very obvious. We will see that today in terms of the response we get from the various political parties in the House. It seems to me and to my party that to a great extent the motion is only window dressing unless there is action that flows from it. I have great reservations that will happen.

I had a vision of a federal budget that recognized the urgency and the crises we are faced with in terms of the treatment of our water. We did not see that in the fall budget and we will not see a budget for perhaps another year that would take this issue into account.

When I hear the Minister of Health saying that we cannot snap our fingers and solve the problem, he is right. It begs the question of where he and the government have been for the last year since Walkerton and where successive governments have been for the last 30 to 40 years.

It all comes down to money, as is often the case. We could set up a co-operative effort between the provinces and the federal government, but the reality is that the municipalities deliver these services. They are responsible for treating our water and our sewage. We cannot divorce those two issues.

I am not sure about the Bloc, but if we passed the motion everybody would be in favour of it. Then, tomorrow, do we just do nothing as we have for these last number of years? Or, do we deal realistically with it? Do we reach into our collective pockets in the form of tax dollars and pass those down to municipalities? They have told us that what they need over the next 10 years is a minimum of \$16.5 billion.

The vast majority of those dollars have to come from the federal government because most of the provinces are either in no position or a very weak position to be able to fund that. At this point we have a commitment in the last federal budget. Over the next six years we have \$2.65 billion committed for all types of municipal infrastructure, not just water or sewage treatment. That includes roads and any number of other items. That \$2.65 billion comes nowhere near dealing with the problem.

• (1230)

What do we have? We have a situation where, from what I am hearing, I expect we will pass this motion. We will probably not do anything more. That is a sham we are perpetuating on the people of the country. If we do not take action we should all be ashamed.

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We no longer can say, as some of the other political parties in the House would say, that we still must have this thrust of having tax cuts. We are seeing the costs of those tax cuts in Walkerton and in North Battleford. We will see it again and again across the country.

We have to get real. We have to dig into the pockets and use the revenue being generated, not to turn back as tax dollars but to flow through so that municipalities across the country can build the proper sewage treatment plants, can treat the water and can do the testing and monitoring that needs to be done, all of which will cost a lot more money than any of those municipalities have.

Unless we are serious about it, as I said earlier, we will simply perpetuate this sham. That is not something any of us should be proud of. All I can say on behalf of the New Democratic Party is that over the next weeks and months we will continue to press the government to develop an appropriate infrastructure program for the municipalities.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the remarks of my colleague from the NDP. He speaks of window dressing. I am curious as to whether he would agree that what we are seeing at least initially in this debate is an indication that the government will in fact vote in favour of the motion this evening in a very clever and Janus-like fashion, that it will support the motion and indicate in some detail it is already doing what the motion calls for.

The government just as erroneously and disingenuously did the same thing when it came to the sex offender registry, indicating that it was already taking steps. The government continuously denies and distracts and delays. These are very much the trademarks of the government.

On a specific note, and I know it is an issue my friend would be aware of, there is this fundamental issue of health that stems from clean air and clean water. There is a specific example, perhaps the most extreme example in the country today, and that is the ongoing titanic environmental disaster of the tar ponds in Sydney, Cape Breton. What was once a very pristine body of water in that community has now become a chemical pool from steel plant chemicals and treatments that have gone into that water supply. Just outside our Chamber there is a hunger strike taking place in regard to this by Elizabeth May. With Maude Barlow, she has written a book called *Frederick Street: Life and Death on Canada's Love Canal*.

In the context of this debate, I am wondering if there are specific recommendations. My friend touched upon the aspect of the money that is required, but is there not a need for leadership from the government and a need for a specific plan to address situations like the Sydney tar ponds where the health risks are phenomenal and are

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documented? The cancer rates and the rates of other serious illnesses are startling in comparison with other communities in Canada.

Though we have Walkerton and we now have North Battleford, this is a looming disaster for an entire community in Sydney, Cape Breton. Would my friend share with us any thoughts or advice he might have for the government in order to finally address this huge embarrassment and environmental disaster in Sydney, Cape Breton?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, I have been following rather closely for the last two years the issues surrounding the Sydney tar ponds and the impact that is having on human health, both from the perspective of my position as environmental critic for the NDP but also, and more important at this time, in regard to the impact that is having on human health.

• (1235)

The statistics that come out of there are just horrendous and bring us back to the issue. What has happened there, I am very afraid, will just be repeated by the government, because it has had in place a committee for going on five or six years, I believe, and there was a preceding committee. The committee really has not accomplished anything. I think everybody agrees with that. It is almost moribund in its lack of activity and has had no effective results at all, so while nothing is going on there, in the meantime we have people literally suffering serious health problems and there have been a number of deaths that I think can safely be attributed to the toxins that exist in the air, the soil and the water in that region.

The hunger strike that Elizabeth May is conducting at this point just highlights the level of frustration that people are feeling in Cape Breton over that issue and over the lack of any serious results being achieved while people are suffering major health problems. We believe that very serious numbers of deaths will ultimately come from that.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate and join with my colleague, the member for Windsor—St. Clair, in expressing the support of the New Democratic Party with respect to this motion.

We want to thank the Conservative Party for bringing this matter to the House and we wish to comment on the fact that there seems to be, based on the first couple of hours of debate, considerable support for the motion. That is a good sign. If at the end of the day we can unite around something as fundamental to the health and well-being of Canadians as a safe drinking water supply in our country, then we will have done a great service and we will have fulfilled our responsibility as members of parliament representing a level of government that is required to act on health protection matters.

What I think is so important today is to acknowledge that health protection is a fundamental responsibility of the federal government. It was obviously very disconcerting to hear yesterday from the Minister of Health that in fact standards, laws and guidelines in terms of quality of water are not necessarily the solution.

An hon. member: It was shameful.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, as one of my colleagues just said, that was a shameful response. In fact, when it comes to health protection it is the law that we turn to, it is tough regulations that we require, and it is leadership from the federal government that is so imperative on all fronts. The government has failed to uphold its responsibility to act under even existing legislation to ensure that a national health safety system is in place.

The problem we are dealing with today is not just that we are trying to get the government to move away from a position of inaction and passivity. It is also an attempt to get the government to reverse almost a decade of catering to individuals and organizations with a vested interest in seeing privatization, deregulation and off loading of responsibilities so that in fact there are few standards to adhere to and there is unfettered access in terms of marketplace endeavours.

I sense today that there is a shift in the political climate in this country, that in fact the pendulum is swinging. Given the facts that this motion was initiated by the Tories and seems to have support from at least some Alliance members, it suggests to me that we are finally, as a collective, coming back to the realization that government must play an active regulatory role in health protection. That means setting standards, national policies and mandatory guidelines when it comes to something as basic as the quality of our water supply.

• (1240)

I hear some acknowledgement on this whole issue from members across the way on the Liberal benches. That is heartening, because over the last little while we have witnessed a government that has been prepared to evade its responsibilities on fundamental health protection matters.

When the government was elected in 1993, it began a process of moving our health protection capacity within government from a precautionary model, or one that said the ultimate responsibility of government is to ensure that the do no harm principle is maintained, to a risk management model where in fact private industry would set the standards and government would monitor and do its best. In fact, when it came down to it, it was a buyer beware model that had to be followed.

Today we are feeling the consequences of that kind of approach and we are realizing that it was wrong. We are paying the price now. We have to catch up on many fronts. We have talked in the

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House about food safety, about adverse reactions from drugs and about the quality of air. Today we are talking about probably the most fundamental issue when it comes to health and well-being, that being the safety of our water supply.

What do we have today in terms of federal action to deal with the fallout from Walkerton and North Battleford and all the other centres that my colleague from Windsor—St. Clair referred to? Not much.

We should have learned from the Walkerton tragedy a year ago. At that time many organizations and members of parliament were calling for the government to put in place a national water policy with mandatory standards and with the financial resources to deal with infrastructure difficulties. Nothing has really happened in that whole year. Back then in the spring of 2000 numerous organizations and members of parliament talked about how our water management laws were outdated, how they went back to the fifties. They talked about how our general anti-pollution laws were outdated and needed to be revised. They talked about unenforceable policies, guidelines and objectives of varying vintage.

What has happened since that period in our history? What good came out of the Walkerton tragedy? Why do we have to deal with North Battleford today when in fact all the lessons were there for us to learn one year ago or more? That is the travesty of the situation.

However, we all know that it is never too late to learn from the mistakes of our past and today is an opportunity to move forward. Today we call upon the government to actually take action, in whatever form it wants. It could be, as a senator has recommended, to amend the Food and Drugs Act to include mandatory standards and programs dealing with quality of water. It could be a separate, safe, national water safety law, as other groups have recommended. It could be the establishment of a special committee with resources to get moving on the problems immediately. The bottom line is that we need action today. Canadians need action today.

I do not think any of us want to hear from constituents who are worried about whether the water they have to access is safe. With something as vital and as essential as this, which we require on a day to day basis, we cannot allow people to live with that kind of uncertainty, worry, fear and anxiety about their health and safety. There is no reason for the government to delay on this matter.

• (1245)

Yesterday the Minister of Health referred briefly to a bill he introduced back in 1997, Bill C-14, an act respecting the safety and effectiveness of materials that come into contact with or treat water destined for human consumption. I remind members of the House that bill only dealt with a tiny portion of the issue of water safety. It dealt with the questions of water filters and water plumbing. It was

pulled suddenly from the agenda of the House and not returned, and no action has been taken since.

Many members in the House expressed concerns at that time about whether or not the government was truly serious about addressing water quality, or whether it was just another attempt to respond to international trade agreements, to harmonize standards globally. We questioned whether or not there was a real framework in terms of dealing with a national safety system. We were anxious to see that debate continue. We call again on the government to bring forward a piece of legislation or a set of recommendations that will allow us to move further immediately.

In closing, let us remember Walkerton a year ago and North Battleford this week. Canadians are feeling particularly vulnerable in terms of being exposed to contaminated drinking water. All these events underscore the need for safe drinking water legislation and mandatory guidelines on the quality of our water. We must act now.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have asked this question several times during the debate and almost everyone has prevaricated in their answers, so I would like to put this very simple question to the member who just spoke.

Is it the federal government's responsibility to impose national water quality standards on all provinces so that all Canadians are guaranteed that the water they drink is safe to drink anywhere in Canada? It is a simple question.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, my answer is yes.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member on her thoughtful commentary. I know she has been a strong advocate and a strong voice on health issues for all Canadians.

My question to her is equally simple. Given the rash of severe cuts we have seen imposed by the government since 1993, taking billions of dollars out of provincial transfers, does she not agree there has been a cascading cost down to provinces and subsequently down to municipalities that to a large extent could be pointed to as part of the responsibility for failing infrastructure that has left Canadians vulnerable to the types of situations we have seen in Walkerton and North Battleford? Does she agree that there is a responsibility directly attributable to the federal government?

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes. Just to elaborate very briefly, the cuts by the government since 1993 in terms of transfer payments for health and other social programs are cause for the load provincial governments are now feeling.

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I think, though, specifically of the cuts to the health protection branch, the dismantling of the drug safety bureau, the erosion of the food safety lab, and the inaction on contaminants and toxins in consumer products. All those cuts have meant that provincial governments, in order to act in the best interest of their citizens and to ensure a health protection system and a safety system are in place, are left to pick up the pieces.

Obviously they cannot do it on their own. We cannot continue to have a patchwork of systems across the country. We cannot continue to evade federal responsibility for something as vital as safe drinking water.

Mr. Lynn Myers (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think Mr. Harris would have something quite different to say in terms of the cascading effect. It was he, after all, and his Conservative government in Ontario that took a big bite out of water safety and security and, more to the point, privatized. This had a net impact of making it difficult for the good folks in Walkerton, which is very close to my area. When I was mayor we put in place the first groundwater protection security system in Canada in the region of Waterloo, the very municipality in which I was mayor. It is very important water.

• (1250)

I wanted to ask the member opposite the following question. Given her zest for this area, which I think is rightfully placed and quite correct, would she use the same kind of enthusiasm, shall we say, in picking up on the Sierra legal defence fund's report card on Saskatchewan getting a C, Manitoba getting a C minus, and British Columbia getting a D when it comes to water safety and security?

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I can actually point to many differences between the present federal Liberals and the Harris Conservatives in Ontario in terms of an agenda of privatization, deregulation and offloading. Both levels of government bear responsibility for the current critical situation we are facing and both must take measures to act in the best interest of common good and public safety.

In terms of his last comment around the Sierra club's report card, let me say from my vantage point that the provincial government in Manitoba is certainly working hard on environmental issues. As the Conservative member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough just said, it is pretty hard for provincial governments to deal with the cascading effect of federal cutbacks and downloading on to provincial governments.

Every provincial government would probably welcome the notion of national standards when it comes to water quality and would welcome some support and leadership from the federal government to try to address a very serious and systemic problem in society today.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, I pay tribute to the hon. member from Winnipeg on her contribution in terms of protecting human health. Quite simply, the Liberal Party of Canada prior to the election in 1993 called upon the federal government to have safe drinking water legislation in place.

The Liberal red book 3 said that clean air and water were Canada's birthright. Does the member agree with the Progressive Conservative Party that clean drinking water is the birthright of all Canadians?

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I think the answer to that is obvious. Based on my speech today and the work my colleagues and I in the NDP have been doing over many years, we believe that access to safe water is a right as members of a civil society, a civilized nation.

The federal government has a responsibility to ensure that the food we eat, the drugs we must take for health reasons, the water we drink to survive, the air we breathe, the medical devices we must use, and the blood transfused must be safe beyond a reasonable doubt. The government should always act in terms of the precautionary principle, ensuring that no harm comes to Canadians through these vital essentials of life.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, first, I wish to indicate that I will be sharing my time with the member for Brandon—Souris. I know that you are a personal admirer of the member for Brandon—Souris. I am sure that you will wait for the end of my speech in order to hear what he has to say.

Today, we are talking about drinking water, because problems exist. Water is primordial. It is life. Except that now it can also mean death or illness. It is something we must therefore talk about.

• (1255)

I had the opportunity in an earlier life to be the mayor of a municipality and the reeve of an RCM for 11 years. As such, I had to deal with two water contamination problems.

Between you and me, we were not prepared. The first time, the problem involved ammoniacal nitrogen, and I will not give a course on chemistry. What is ammoniacal nitrogen? It is a mixture of dead leaves, detritus and fecal coliforms from both animals and humans which completely unbalances the filtration system.

The basic filtration system in a small or medium size municipality is not complicated. Water is drawn from a river or a well, and sodium hydroxide, alum and chlorine are added. That is it.

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When things are out of balance, they increase the chlorine to kill the bugs. However chlorine cannot kill all the bugs in the water. So some people got gastro-enteritis but, thank God, nothing more serious.

A few years later, another problem arose. This one was due to a spill: liquid manure got into our main reservoir and, once again, threw everything out of kilter. Again, we had problems with the public. Following these disasters, there were a number of them throughout the country, people changed their way of doing things. They evolved. They adapted. They created new regulations, new law, except that they were not uniform.

In Quebec, for instance, the regulations are not applied the same by all municipalities. Why? Because they do not all have the same means. The Government of Quebec has probably been one of the most active governments, producing new regulations and new statutes, although there has been a bit of a delay because of the applicability of this legislation.

The municipalities are told "This is what you have to do". However they lack the expertise and means the major urban centres have. Some provinces are not as advanced as others. The comment is often made to the federal government "What are you doing messing about with drinking water? That is a provincial jurisdiction".

People's health is not provincial, not federal, not municipal, not the responsibility of a school board. When there is a public health problem, we as elected representatives have a duty to assume our responsibilities and to do something. This does not mean overstepping jurisdictional rights. If people are not putting the interests of those they represent foremost, it is the role of this parliament to let them know and to take the appropriate steps.

If a province is in line, that is fine. Debates may, however, be raised at some point. Provinces are starting to set up commissions. Quebec, for instance, held a symposium on water a few years ago. It even declared a moratorium on all water bottling plants in Quebec. Major commissions of inquiry are cropping up in the various provinces. If there are a few fatalities, a few cases of illness, a commission is struck. There is no uniformity, and the information is not even shared.

What we are saying is that the federal government must be in a position to bring together all partners in order to put criteria in place, standards for across Canada. There is nothing dangerous about a standard for all of Canada. It will be a minimum, one that will need adjustment, of course. It is not good for 30 years; adjustments will need to be made within a certain timeframe. This is an evolving situation, and so standards will have to be adjusted as we go along in order to keep our water drinkable.

The greatest reserve of drinking water is in Canada. People drinking Canadian water have been dying. Although the situation does not really lend itself to such a comparison, if we were the top beef producer in the world and people were dying from eating beef, a whole industry would be at risk.

What do people do when there are problems with their drinking water? Instead of putting pressure on all levels of government, including the federal and provincial governments, they walk over to the convenience store and buy bottled water, because they have no choice. This does not solve the drinking water problem in Canada.

• (1300)

What we are saying is that time has come for the federal government to assume its responsibilities. We are not necessarily talking about a bill like those that used to specify which screw, hose or pipe to use. We are not talking about hardware; we are talking about global issues.

We must ask our partners in confederation to assess the situation and to take action. This is a public health issue.

I am telling my colleagues from Quebec "Do not be afraid, this is not a Liberal motion". I know that the Liberals are in office. I know it is disturbing and tiring. It is upsetting to see the government introduce bills. It is always messing around with the grey areas, in terms of jurisdiction. However this is a motion from a political party that is respected by the regions and provinces. We need help to push the government in the right direction.

This motion does not jeopardize the jurisdictions of the provinces. If they want to do the job, let them do it. Are we not part of a country? The federal government has a role to play. It must contact its partners, so that they can find solutions together.

Do not start a war, do not start fighting over provincial jurisdictions. We know all about that. In any case, the supreme court is there, should the federal government get involved in provincial jurisdictions. Under the constitution, an appeal is possible. The problem is that there are some grey areas in the constitution.

We are saying that people must get together. Drinking water is under provincial jurisdiction, but its export is a federal matter. In this House alone, is there a minister responsible for water in general? Is there one? No. Five or six ministers at least are involved: the ministers of health, public works, intergovernmental affairs, the environment, fisheries and oceans, and soon. Everyone has a say on water issues, and more specifically, on drinking water.

My provincial colleagues, including those from Quebec, should not be afraid to support such a motion. They should tell themselves one thing, which comes from the civil code of Quebec, and that is, we have to act reasonably, according to the spirit of the civil code. If we act reasonably, we can avoid many problems when they arise.

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We invite the members to set a course, to look in partnership at the best solutions and standards. Standards change. If there is ever a problem, we in the Progressive Conservative Party cannot be accused of doing nothing.

This is only a motion, and we are an opposition party. This is why we hope that both the government and the opposition will work together to ensure respect for jurisdictions. It is time to stop getting our knickers in a twist. I know it is difficult with the government opposite. We must stop and recognize that there is a real problem. If one province does its job, so much the better. If there is one that does not, or if public health is at risk, no one better come to me saying it is a jurisdictional issue. It is an issue of accountability, and that starts here in parliament.

[English]

Mr. Lynn Myers (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with a number of the points made by the hon. member. About six years ago when I was a councillor for the region of Waterloo there was an outbreak of cryptosporidium. It is not a pleasant thing to go through. Fortunately for us we had an alternate water supply and other ways of coping. However it was nothing like what the people of Saskatchewan are going through and what the people of Walkerton went through.

This is a very important motion, one of great concern to Canadians. It behoves us as parliamentarians to review the things Health Canada has been doing in this area in terms of setting out guidelines and publications, researching the effects of water on human health, and looking at different treatment additives and devices.

• (1305)

People are looking into the issue in a meaningful way, especially the people at Health Canada. Can we do more? We can always do more on such an important health related issue. In budget 2000 the government committed \$2.65 billion over the next six years to infrastructure, green projects and other things commensurate with what we are talking about today.

I was interested in the member's comments on jurisdiction. There are always sensitivities relating to federal, provincial and territorial discussions. There are sensitivities when it comes to who is doing the work and who is mandated to do it.

I would like to hear the member explain a little more how he thinks the process could and should work. Perhaps he could use Quebec, his home province, as an example and explain how best to make sure jurisdictional squabbles vis-à-vis water supply are set aside in this case in the best interest of Canadians wherever they live in this great country. I would be interested in the member's opinion on that.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Jurisdictions are part of our everyday life in government. They must be respected.

That being said, a jurisdiction shared by everyone is called leadership. We are saying that it is not because there is a jurisdictional problem that the federal government does not have a unifying role to play.

This morning, our leader, the member for Calgary-Centre, said that this was what co-operative federalism was all about. The fact that there is a problem in a jurisdiction does not mean that I will not help it. One does not leave someone to rot because one is not supposed to be on his sidewalk. One gives him a hand, while respecting jurisdictions.

We are saying that it is not a case of setting norms or standards, call them whatever, and then imposing them on the provinces. That is not what this is about. There must be consensus with our partners. Once this has been obtained and created, then yes, a national standard can be drawn up.

As for the issue of drinking water, there is no getting away from it. It is a matter of life and, unfortunately these days, a matter of death. The federal government must play a unifying role, all the while respecting jurisdictions. For us in the Progressive Conservative Party, respect for the provinces is probably the most important, because it also involves respect for the regions and the people who live there.

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question will be very brief.

I have a little trouble with the statement that they will respect jurisdictions and that that is what must be done. I have a problem with that because it involves the consensus just mentioned. They come along and step in and we have a national standard. When it comes time to raise these standards or change them, Quebec will have its hands tied in its own jurisdiction. Would the member for Richmond—Arthabaska comment on this?

Mr. André Bachand: Mr. Speaker, when regulations are set by consensus, they have built-in mechanisms that come in handy when it is time to modernize these regulations. Any analogy is lame, I agree, but the five main principles of the Canada Health Act are pretty vague. Provinces can do almost anything they want as long as they maintain a minimum level of service. The problem with this legislation is that it is not reviewed on a regular basis.

As far as public health is concerned, we should have shared national standards. Of course, these would be implemented by the provinces, which would be done again by consensus or under an

agreement with the federal government. Jurisdictions clearly have to be respected.

The constitution is very clear on this issue: court challenges are always possible. Quebec has not gone much to the supreme court recently to get an opinion on a constitutional matter. Still, all the provinces and even the federal government have the power to do so.

So, I do not think it is really a problem. Maybe we just need to change the players on the other side. If we all agree to work together, I believe that we can get the people opposite untwist their knickers, so to speak.

[English]

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Fundy—Royal, who moved our opposition day motion today. It is rather timely and certainly rather topical. The member for Fundy—Royal has been working on the issue quite a while, even before the current problems in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. The issue was on the minds of Canadians even before the terrible happenings in North Battleford.

• (1310)

I congratulate my other colleague, the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska, who as we all know was the previous mayor of Asbestos.

I will deal with two areas. One relates to my previous municipal experience. I will also touch briefly on the area of federal responsibility, as the federal government has a large responsibility for first nations people in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

We accept the motion and hope members of the government and other opposition parties accept it. No commodity in our world, our country and our municipalities is more sacred than water. If we do not have food, clean air and water then what we know as life cannot exist. We must put our priorities in perspective and water is one of them.

In 1993 the federal government and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities put an infrastructure program into place. It was a tripartite arrangement between the federal, provincial and municipal governments.

I mention that for specific reasons. First, co-operative federalism has worked in all provinces. All levels of government, municipal, provincial and federal, got together and said they had needs which could best be served by working together. We all work for the same people. Our constituents are the constituents of all three levels of government. It is therefore important that we work together to provide the best services we can.

The infrastructure program was about dollars. We are talking about standards. We can, through compromise and consensus among all levels of government, put proper standards into place that benefit all provinces and peoples throughout the country.

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In 1993 my community had access to millions of dollars and I played a role in decision making. We put the majority of those dollars into the sewer and water infrastructure our constituents needed to be able to work and live in the community. We put most of the money into water. As mentioned, single source communities like North Battleford are running into serious issues of contamination. My community spent millions of dollars to find a second water supply. We spent those dollars knowing full well our constituents needed an uncontaminated water source.

We also put millions of dollars into the sewage treatment plant which sends sewage into the rivers. It was necessary to treat the effluent so people downstream would not suffer problems. I say with great pride that we spent those dollars in the right places.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities says Canadians are the second highest users of water. It says Canadians use 300 litres of water per person per day. That is a huge amount. It is something we have taken for granted. We must put standards into place to make sure those 300 litres are of proper quality.

A member of the government mentioned that \$2.6 billion over six years had been identified by the government to go into infrastructure. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has indicated that infrastructure to ensure quality water for Canadian citizens would require some \$16.5 billion. When \$16.5 billion is needed, \$2.6 billion over six years is but a drop in the bucket.

I suspect we can work together, provincially, municipally and federally, to put the necessary standards into place. We have a substantial number of first nations people in Manitoba, particularly in Saskatchewan.

• (1315)

I would like to quote from an article in which Chief Matthew Coon Come said:

“Walkerton made news across Canada,” the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations said. “But about one out of eight of our aboriginal communities are threatened by unsafe water, which each year kills our newborn and our elderly.

These deaths don't make the front pages of Canadian newspapers. . .

This accurately sums up the problems that are evident in our water supply in our aboriginal communities. One out of eight aboriginal communities today do not have proper water quality for the people they serve.

The national chief's statement is also supported by a 1995 Health Canada report that found that 171 reserves, or one in five at that time, had water systems that could affect the health and safety of the community if the problems were not addressed. Those problems were not addressed. Today there is still one in eight communities that still suffer through an inadequate water supply.

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Drinking water became so bad a few years ago that aboriginal residents were told by health experts to give only bottled water to their pets because the quality was so bad. The assembly of first nations recently reported that 79 communities or 12% had what Health Canada called potentially dangerous drinking water. These statistics demonstrate the severity and the extent this issue has impacted those communities.

National water safety standards must take into account not only what is happening in our rural urban centres across Canada, but also in our aboriginal communities.

When I say that there is a need for us as Canadians to identify the need for water purification, I cannot underestimate the seriousness of that statement. The motion before us today sets those standards. We currently have guidelines that can or cannot be followed dependent upon how the jurisdiction wishes to follow them. We have no specific standard.

You have the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to travel across the country as I do. I go from Manitoba to Alberta, to British Columbia to Quebec City or to the maritimes. When I take a glass of water I believe that, as a Canadian, I should be convinced that that water is of sufficient quality to drink and should not be afraid for my health, welfare and well-being. That is where we have to set the standards.

Right now in Canada we do not have a standard or guideline set for the testing of cryptosporidium, that very little parasite that is causing all that trouble in North Battleford. There is no need by our guidelines to test for that. That is utterly insane. The United States has a requirement, a guideline and a standard to test for cryptosporidium. When I go to my friend's in Alberta, I expect that the water supply not to be contaminated with cryptosporidium. However right now I do not know that.

That is why we are here today suggesting that the government, with the co-operative federalism, that wonderful buzzword, work in concert with provincial governments, as well as municipal governments, to put forward the standards which could be accepted. So that when I and my family travelled across Canada we would not have the possibility of encountering a water quality that would not be good for our health.

The Progressive Conservative party did not put forward this motion simply because of what has happened in the last number of days. In our policy statement and during the last election we indicated that this was a very serious issue. The PC party said that if we were in government we would introduce a safe water act which would legislate and ensure safe drinking water quality standards for Canadians. That would be harmonized with the provinces and territories.

Everyone across Canada should have that same security in knowing their water is safe. That comes from an election platform back in the year 2000. We put our money where our mouth was. We

put our water where our platform was. I suspect that the government should embrace what our platform was.

The Conservative party also said that we would enshrine into law and harmonize with the provinces and territories Health Canada's guidelines for drinking water. As a result, any municipal water source in non-compliance would be immediately disclosed to the public. Transparency concerning the water supply would build the confidence that Canadians deserve. We had that policy in our platform, so we speak from the heart and from a policy that was put into place that speaks to this very issue.

• (1320)

I thank the House for the opportunity and the time to speak to what I consider to be one of the most, if not the most, important issues facing Canadians today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as I explained in the House earlier, Quebec has been working on draft regulations since June 19, 2000. A final draft designed to make standards far exceed those being proposed for Canada will be submitted to the Quebec cabinet.

It has already been proven that Quebec has the best water management system. What scares me about this motion, as noble as it may be, is that programs already exist. Again it will look like duplication. Even experts will not know where to turn, and we will be dividing this concentration of expertise. Who will be the loser in all this? The environment.

I also heard the member for Toronto—Danforth tell us earlier that the government wanted to respect this jurisdiction, because water was too important. Something else is important, however, and I am talking about respecting jurisdictions provided for in sections 91 and 92 for over 100 years. These jurisdictions have already been divided, I am supposed to believe that there is no danger of opening the door to encroachment when water is a provincial jurisdiction, therefore Quebec's jurisdiction, and the establishment of national standards is being proposed.

How are you going to convince me that these national standards will not create the same situation we saw in other areas, such as the millennium scholarships, education and health? How are you going to assure me that the government will respect this jurisdiction? I do not believe it will.

In light of what I just said, what do you think about these remarks?

The Deputy Speaker: Before I give the floor to the member for Brandon—Souris, I would like to remind the member for Châteauguay that any comments, questions and interventions must be addressed through the Chair, and not directly to the member.

[English]

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Châteauguay was actually working through the chair. He was just looking at me and that is why his comments may have seemed a bit more pointed.

I say to the member for Châteauguay that the Bloc is losing its *raison d'être*. We do know that there are certain provincial jurisdictions in the provinces. Having been in another level of government, I recognize that those jurisdictions are selfishly guarded, as well they should.

The member for Châteauguay said that there would be standards set within the province of Quebec. Good for the province of Quebec. I hope those standards would be set at a higher level and a higher bar than perhaps the standards would be set at a federal level because they would then take precedence. Those standards would take precedence within the provincial government and those would be the standards they would try to achieve. I say good for the hon. member. I hope he does have the highest standard of water quality within our country.

However there are other provinces that perhaps may not set those same standards. What I am saying is that when I go to Quebec City, one of the most beautiful cities in the world, I expect to have water quality that I can depend on. I expect also when I go to Winnipeg, Manitoba or Dauphin, Manitoba that the level of standard, that bar, should be attained. I see the member for Dauphin—Swan River, whose area had some serious water quality problems.

As for the jurisdiction, absolutely. Co-operative federalism is a buzzword we have heard in the House so often. I wish we could finally put it into effect. We should have co-operation among the provinces, the territories, and I have even thrown in the municipal governments. It is necessary that there be a tripartite co-operative relationship and a tripartite funding relationship.

• (1325)

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, congratulations to my colleague and to all members who have taken part in the debate.

With respect to the question from the hon. member for Châteauguay's question, I say to my friend from Brandon—Souris that there is nothing which would in effect harm Quebec's standards to adopt and accept the motion that has been put forward. In fact it would very much embrace a situation that he has quite rightly pointed out. If Quebec has legislation pending, and I take him at his word, which would try to set a higher standard in the province of Quebec, that is perfectly in keeping with the notion of co-operative federalism. In fact, I will be the first to acknowledge that in the area of criminal justice with young offenders Quebec set a very high standard which other provinces can strive to match or exceed.

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Does my hon. colleague from Brandon—Souris not see that the motion is consistent with Quebec's approach, that is to always strive to put water safety, in terms of Canadians' health first and we should be trying to match if not exceed Quebec's example?

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough was absolutely correct in reconfirming what I had said earlier. We hope and wish the Bloc Québécois and its members will support the motion for the very fact that they on behalf of their constituents would now be setting a benchmark and standard throughout the country which would have water quality as its *raison d'être*. If the province of Quebec wants to raise that bar even higher and set those standards higher, we would applaud that.

Mr. Andy Savoy (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time. It is certainly a pleasure to be back in the House. If they say "your house is your home" I guess I am back home. I have been away the last weeks attending to the my new son, Cade Andrew, who was born on April 17.

The issue is very important on the heels of the recent tragedy at North Battleford and certainly last year's tragedy in Walkerton. It is critical to the health of all Canadians, and is something that is very close to my heart.

As a parent with a 22 month old and a newborn and knowing that contaminants have a more serious effect on the newborn and the elderly, I am very concerned.

Having been an alderman in the Village of Perth-Andover, I am also familiar with the issues from a municipal perspective. They are very serious, and all municipalities take them very seriously. In funding crunches, I also understand the administration and construction of the municipal facilities.

As an engineer for the last nine years, I worked in the environmental sector, specifically in the area of water quality, water and waste water quality. For the last five years, I have been president and/or vice president of the New Brunswick Environment Industries Association. One of its goals is educating the population of New Brunswick on environmental issues.

I would also add that as part of that association I was allowed to see a lot of the Canadian technologies, as far as drinking water goes. Companies such as ADI in the riding of Fredericton, Zenon and Trojan Technologies in Ontario have internationally renowned technologies on clean water.

Last June I also helped initiate and co-chaired a clean water conference in Fredericton, New Brunswick, entitled "Your Drinking Water: Ensuring Its Safety". Three hundred people attended from across Atlantic Canada to talk about drinking water issues. The goal of that conference was to educate the people on the perils of unsafe drinking water, how to remediate unsafe drinking water

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if they ran into that situation in their communities and how to protect their communities against unsafe drinking water. It was very much an educational conference, and I am proud to announce that I will be doing it again this September.

As members can see, from a parent's perspective, from a municipal politician's perspective, from a professional perspective and certainly from a personal perspective, this is one of the issues I feel very strongly about and have some background in. In fact part of my platform during the last campaign was clean water issues. One of the reasons I came to Ottawa was my strong beliefs in clean water.

On the specific motion, I do not agree with the honourable intent of the motion. It is an excellent motion but I have some concerns. The hon. member's goals are very honest and productive for society in Canada.

• (1330)

As recently as last night, at, I assume, a multiparty dinner, the leader of the PC Party mentioned that one of the policy areas on which he would like to co-operate with the official opposition was specifically in the area of a renewed or healthy federalism, which he said was to respect the rights of the provinces. Some would see it as flying in the face of a renewed federalism, which is respecting the rights of provincial jurisdictions.

I will turn to our Liberal record on water quality and some of the initiatives that we have undertaken. In the 2000 Liberal election platform, *Opportunity for All*, we committed to addressing the issue of safe drinking water by funding improvements to municipal water and wastewater systems through the infrastructure Canada program.

We also committed to working with provincial, territorial and municipal governments to create the first building code for municipal water and wastewater facilities. Such a code would help improve the ability of municipalities to meet water quality standards.

In the 2000 budget the Liberal government committed \$2.65 billion over six years to fund improvements to infrastructure across Canada. We created the \$25 million green municipal enabling fund and the \$100 million green municipal investment fund to help municipalities improve energy efficiency, water and wastewater treatment, solid waste treatment and public transportation.

The Liberal government is providing leadership on the protection of clean drinking water through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. As recently as May 1, council members agreed that the protection of surface and groundwater quality was a priority. The council agreed to collaborate on water research, to share best management practices, to accelerate the

development of water quality guidelines and to link existing water quality monitoring networks to provide comprehensive access to timely information.

The government has shown a commitment to safe drinking water for all people in Canada by focusing on stronger national guidelines for water quality and by strengthening the role of the National Water Research Institute. The institute has an excellent well water monitoring and modelling program, that it is working on now, by funding improvements to municipal water and wastewater systems, and by investing in research and development on better land use practices.

One of the major issues is the healthy federalism that I spoke about. We have to consult with the provinces to see if they support us in taking the lead on this issue. Do they want us to establish enforceable national drinking water standards?

I understand the need to address this issue and I respect the sincere intent of the motion. I commend the hon. member for Fundy—Royal for his quick action and for his attempt to find a quick solution to the serious situation. We must consult, liaise and ultimately, in the words of his own leader, respect the provinces.

Although I have concerns regarding the healthy federalism in consulting with the provinces, it is an important enough solution. I am proud to say to my constituents and to my family that I will vote in support of the motion.

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too, as most members of the House, wish to thank the member for Fundy—Royal. When it comes to a health issue that affects the lives of every person in the country, it is imperative that we put aside partisan politics and work toward the best interest of everyone in the country. The motion does that.

The motion respects all members in the House and it tries to put an issue forward that would be fundamentally helpful for the whole system. It would help the federal, provincial and municipal governments to work together to make certain that these kinds of tragic incidents that happened in Walkerton and North Battleford do not repeat themselves time and time again.

When I was first told that there was a boil water order in the municipality that I live in, I found it difficult to accept here in Canada. We talk about boiling water or not drinking water when we travel to some third world countries but not many of us thought about that situation happening here in our own country. It did bring shock but it also brought awareness.

• (1335)

Everybody in the country must be made aware that we have to do all we can, at all cost, to ensure we have safe drinking water and a

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safe supply of other items such as food and so on. It is clearly an issue that affects the lives of everyone. The barrier to this point has been that public opinion has not moved forward.

When I was the mayor of Kingsville much of the municipal fund was spent in trying to improve the water system. Our small community was looking at \$1.5 million year after year to separate the water system so that raw sewage was never pumped into the Great Lakes. A great deal of work was done on the water system to make sure that safe water was available.

We now find that systems are getting older, but we can now test the systems to find bacteria or micro-organisms that create somewhat of a problem. Places like Walkerton and North Battleford raise our awareness of what is happening. It is important that we have standards across the country to make certain that no one can be threatened under any circumstances by our systems.

It is extremely important we make sure that frequent sampling is done on a regular and consistent basis. The national guidelines structured between the federal government and the provinces show us a good direction to head in. They point out where we need to go.

The issue is to ensure that those national guidelines are enforceable. That is what the debate is about today. It is about ensuring that water pollutants are treated properly so that our water is safe, that the aesthetic concerns about water which Canadians demand are met, and that we test water on a frequent basis to make sure it is safe for all Canadians. As I understand it, the national guidelines have been accepted in Alberta, Quebec and Nova Scotia. Hopefully that program will continue and cover the rest of the provinces as well.

By making sure that all provinces move in an appropriate way to correct the systems that need correcting is the important issue of the day. Yes, the Liberal government did take action. No, we cannot correct all things in one quick sweep. I do not believe many people 5 or 10 years ago would have thought that we would be faced with the dilemma we now have with our water systems.

During the Walkerton incident there was a great deal of discussion about water safety across Canada. As an election platform the Liberal government looked very carefully at the infrastructure in the country. The government may not do all the things that need to be done, but by working in co-operation with the provincial and municipal governments and by directing \$2.65 billion toward infrastructure it will go a long way in the next few years to ensure that the needed safety factors are in place.

It is important we also realize that we as the federal government do not do things alone. As our minister said yesterday, passing a law is not the only way to resolve a problem.

• (1340)

It is important that we have consultations with the provinces, territories and municipalities. We must make certain that we take their expertise, technology and their advances into consideration so that we build a system that would be workable and safe for all Canadians. We must ensure that municipalities spend what is required to make certain that the municipal water systems and waste systems are state of the art technology. Canada must go in that direction to make sure that we are there.

The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment on May 1 put an agreement in place to protect surface groundwater quality, making sure that it was a priority for all governments across Canada. It agreed to collaborate on water research. That means we can bring together the experts who know systems that are workable and the solutions available and who can make certain that all municipalities and all provinces have all the information required to use the best technology possible to work on this problem.

It also agreed to share best management practices. Oftentimes training and management practices are not necessarily as they should be. It is important to realize that under proper management systems it is possible that the Walkerton situation may have been averted.

We have heard testimony from Walkerton. We are all aware that there were some very difficult situations in their management system. That should not happen and we must make sure that anyone operating a system maintains it at the best possible level. We need to accelerate the development of our guidelines. They would be structured to make sure that we have a system where everyone could share in what needs to be done and share in the monitoring of all systems across the country.

When we look at the issue it is critical to support the motion which has a tremendous amount of merit. It can take away partisanship in the House. It can make certain that we are all working together to ensure that Canadians have a system that is workable, that is better for everyone than some of the systems of today, and yet takes into account all the technology, costs and resources required to move forward.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my question is quite simple. Does the hon. member believe there should be more money put into basic infrastructure in the country and, if so, how much more than is presently going into it?

Mr. Jerry Pickard: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that as we move along as a society there is a definite requirement for money to be put into infrastructure. We have a problem today in water systems, perhaps many water systems across the country, but new guidelines are being structured and set. New goals and targets are

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being worked on. It is important the experts sit down to look at what is the most cost efficient and yet achievable goals to make certain the system works.

Chlorination was a system used in the past. Today new systems in chlorination and other systems have been developed. I do not know what those costs are. For me to suggest that putting in more money would resolve the question is naive, to say the least. It is also naive for me to say that we do not need more money, but what is clear is that we need a safe system.

We need experts to look at the costs. We know that costs in the past have traditionally been shared by the municipalities and the provinces. We know that the federal government has tried to come into the system with a program of infrastructure. Since first elected in 1993 until now the Liberal government has provided infrastructure dollars to assist municipalities and provincial governments to achieve the goals that need to be achieved.

• (1345)

I believe it is extremely important to look into what the costs are, at how those costs could be shared, at what the role of each level of government is and then make the decisions there. It is not just a simple matter of money. It is a matter of safety, a matter of technology and a matter of what needs to be done in the systems before I could possibly make that commitment.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom: Mr. Speaker, I take the comments with a grain of salt. Members of the military did training exercises in my area before they went to Bosnia. They had a portable water treatment system. They went to the sewage lagoons at one of our local towns and pumped the water out of the sewage lagoon into that system, and out came potable water. I do not buy into that statement that Canadians can wait for studies, government bureaucracy, cost effectiveness or technology. We cannot wait for that.

The systems available now are state of the art, but municipalities cannot afford them. We need a commitment from the federal government for money for basic water system infrastructure. As well, as far as roads are concerned there is no special engineering need for roads. They are a disaster across the country. We need infrastructure money for our municipalities, our cities and our towns.

Mr. Jerry Pickard: Mr. Speaker, I could agree with my colleague across the way if we had to sit back and wait. However, I also believe that many municipalities have looked very carefully at problems if they have had problems. They have had people working at it.

I mentioned my union system. I was shocked. The administrator for the municipality of Leamington chaired a committee to look at

what needed to be done with that system and at what corrections needed to be made. The committee made certain suggestions within technology. Chlorination was one of the recommendations, not only at the source where they are pumping water out but in different areas in the municipality, where they do injections of chlorination in order to resolve the problems in the system.

I believe each system has specific problems in specific areas, which we must deal with. As a result, I would suggest that every municipality has its own area to struggle with and work with. I am not saying it is a blanket, but it is something that has to be dealt with system by system by system.

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time. The motion before us, including the amendment, would read:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should act immediately with the provinces and territories respecting their jurisdiction, to ensure enforceable national drinking water standards that would be enshrined in a Safe Water Act.

I support this motion, for certainly clean drinking water is a trust for basic public safety and standards must be ensured across Canada. Due to local jurisdiction, there must be a national will for co-operation. All must work together with the provinces and the municipalities in setting standards.

We must engage in a full assessment of Canada's domestic consumer water supply, the state of municipal infrastructure, source water protection and land use planning.

Sadly, the misplaced priorities of poor Liberal management are revealed again. Money targeted for infrastructure goes to golf courses rather than water safety. Other bad spending happens when essentials are ignored, such as the HRDC boondoggle and in other ways.

The water is polluted because we pollute it. Standards will not solve the problems in themselves: water, water, everywhere and some not fit to drink.

Although water quality is a provincial responsibility, municipalities operate water treatment plants and have direct contact with the customer. This is why the Federation of Canadian Municipalities may ask the federal government to help establish mandatory national drinking water quality standards.

It could require a constitutional challenge and an act of parliament to enable the federal government to apply enforceable standards nationwide. Overall unfortunately, many provinces do not give sufficient support to municipalities for local water systems.

We are not calling for the federal government to assume all responsibility for water standards. The first step is to have provin-

cial and territorial governments legislate guidelines for drinking water and include enforcement and mandatory testing. Until provinces take positive action, we can expect more needless deaths from drinking water.

● (1350)

However, there is a federal role.

In the case of North Battleford, Saskatchewan, how could it possibly be that a modern city in an industrialized country builds a water treatment plant's river intake downstream of its sewage treatment discharge?

Moreover, this incident would not have occurred if we had the political will to insist on tertiary sewage treatment. How can we possibly find it acceptable to be discharging dangerous sewage into waterways given the obvious environmental and water crises that the world is heading toward? The days of dilution being the solution for pollution are long gone.

Canadians who enjoy a high standard of living need to wake up to environmental reality and demand that more of their earnings of today go to preventing disaster in the future. Every province should be implementing tertiary wastewater treatment policies and zero toxic industrial discharge.

Water is without a doubt the single most important natural resource of Canada. We must protect it. Water is supplied as part of municipal services, yet when there is a drinking water crisis people are advised to boil their water or use bottled water. No one seems to even want to notice that the bottled water comes from private companies. Private citizens and government officials apparently trust the quality of privately supplied bottled water and then rally against privatizing the nations supply of tap water. What we do not pay much for directly, we do not value or protect.

The public health crisis in North Battleford shows signs of easing, but questions about who to blame are getting louder. In a city with a drinking water intake downstream from a sewage treatment plant outflow and dozens of residents sickened by waterborne parasites, there could be plenty of blame to go around. Three deaths have been linked to the cryptosporidium outbreak in the city of 14,000. The number of confirmed infections is expected to rise as lab results come in. Reports from doctors and emergency room staff suggest that the outbreak is stabilizing, as health officials said on the weekend.

It is clear that the provincial environment department, Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management, has been worried about the city's water system since late summer last year, but it took no immediate action. As well, the city said it complied with the provincial guidelines in its water operations. However, in

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September the city issued a drinking water advisory because of bacteria in one section of its distribution system.

The city has already acted on some of the recommendations, including some improvements to the water treatment facility, but some findings were a surprise. One surprise was that the sewage treatment plant was operating over capacity. The North Battleford sewage plant is two kilometres upstream from a drinking water plant built in the 1950s that draws water for part of the city from the North Saskatchewan River. The plant was built by a nearby psychiatric hospital to provide for its own needs after the sewage plant was in place and was eventually sold to the city.

However, if the plant is properly run and operated it should be able to deal with any effluent that may be discharged upstream. The city plans to build a new sewage treatment plant, but it will not be in place until 2003 without any financial assistance from the provincial and federal governments to speed up the schedule.

Gerhard Benade, the medical health officer for the Battlefords Health District, faced questions on the weekend about his apparent delay in acting on a warning about a possible outbreak. A local physician, Geoffrey Lipsett, said that he called Dr. Benade at home on the evening of April 12, just ahead of the Easter long weekend, after one of his patients tested positive for the parasite and the patient's family began displaying similar symptoms.

Dr. Lipsett said that he began to think the problem was more widespread when he discovered that a local pharmacy kept running out of diarrhea medicine. "It suddenly clicked" he said. "I told him I think we might have a problem".

Regional health authorities did not launch a full investigation until April 17, the Tuesday after Easter, when they began checking local hospital records for evidence of other cases. A boil water advisory was issued on April 25 and hardened to a boil water order on April 27. "It was not possible over the Easter weekend to get all the emergency room statistics" said Dr. Benade.

He said there are typically between two and five isolated cases of cryptosporidiosis each year. "We investigate every single case" he said. "You can't issue an advisory based on a single case. A single case of cryptosporidium is not a public health crisis". Dr. Lipsett agreed that his case did not necessarily indicate an outbreak "but that, plus the selling out of the diarrhea medicine, is what made it click in my head" he said.

The motion calls for the public to be informed of results that fall below federal guidelines. Fear that contaminated water is flowing from Canada's faucets has brought calls for national standards and the vote in the Commons should draw attention to this priority. Right now there is no legal requirement to inform the public whether the water is safe or not, even if there is a test that actually says the contrary. I do not think Canadians would think that is responsible leadership.

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• (1355)

Key to the motion is a requirement that municipalities inform the public as quickly as possible of any test results that do not comply with the water quality guidelines issued by Health Canada.

Three people in North Battleford, Saskatchewan have died this spring during an outbreak of cryptosporidium, a parasite from manure that invaded the city's water supply. Last spring, a virulent strain of E. coli bacteria killed seven people and made thousands seriously ill in Walkerton, Ontario. Water warnings have been issued in every province in the past year.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities is to call on Ottawa later this month to endorse national standards on drinking water that could see repeat polluters fined or even jailed.

Freshwater is a scarce resource, even where it seems plentiful. The issue is as much about water quantity as quality. We need to focus on managing our excessive demands for this scarce resource first before we run off to look for more supply. We must consider water as a resource in its full cycle, not just when it is supplied to us from nature, fresh and free of charge. Clean and usable water is not free and we will get what we pay for.

More infrastructure will mean more costly supply lines to extend our gluttonous demands even further. Stricter standards to mandate cleaner water will set even more obstacles in the path of the recovery and reuse of wastewater. Throwing more subsidies at the problem will further insulate consumers and corporations from the real costs of the present excessive demand.

We need to look at the health of whole watersheds and what is regionally going into the water table for wells. It is a lifestyle choice. It is municipal land zoning use. Pollution is deficit spending, wherein we all pay. National standards would help reduce the shifting of costs and would create a level playing field that all must live up to with significant preventive investments.

I support the motion today.

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in the document entitled "Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality", dated April 1999 and prepared by the federal-provincial subcommittee on drinking water, the process was described in this way: it must be stressed that the development of Canadian drinking water guidelines relies on a flexible process that must accommodate the diversities of various jurisdictions.

My question to the hon. member is this: if this is the case, is it possible for the government to come up with one set of guidelines for the country?

Mr. Paul Forseth: Mr. Speaker, we have all heard of the phrase the race to the bottom. There is a role for general standards across the country, but of course the various methods of technology for providing clean and safe water must be flexible at the lower levels.

In the greater Vancouver area, the regional district supplies drinking water in a somewhat sophisticated system from protected watersheds, but it is not the same on the prairies or in other places. Certainly there must be an accommodation of local flexibility and a co-operation among all levels of government, but there is a role for the federal government in eliminating the race to the bottom or those who would not make sufficient investments. We need some national standards.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to stand today to applaud the nurses of our communities and our country on National Nursing Week.

Nurses deal with difficult circumstances daily, both emotionally and physically, as frontline medical staff. Their jobs are tremendously challenging and they face many difficulties every day. Our nurses are our everyday heroes.

I would like to pay a special tribute to the nurses of Humber River Regional Hospital in York West for the wonderful job they do, and especially to Cathy, my daughter, an emergency nurse at Humber Hospital.

I wish to say God bless all of them, and on behalf of the constituents of York West, I wish to express our thanks.

* * *

HIGHWAYS

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I attended the 10th anniversary Traffic Safety Conference in my constituency in Golden, B.C.

While 95% of traffic accidents are caused by drivers, national statistics prove that divided highways reduce accidents and save lives.

The cost of building highways in my constituency is absolutely gigantic. A \$5 million project in the Kicking Horse Canyon will construct only 200 metres of the highway.

The Trans-Canada Highway between Salmon Arm and the Alberta border, with a traffic count of over 15 million, saw 150 fatalities. In the same period the Coquihalla highway, with 25 million, had only 66. These statistics unfortunately will be proven again during the upcoming Victoria Day holiday weekend.

• (1400)

The transport minister knows full well that the federal government contribution to national highways is inadequate. The question is this: what is it going to take to get this government to recognize it has a responsibility to ensure the upgrade of the Trans-Canada Highway? This is literally a life or death situation.

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[Translation]

ALLERGY-ASTHMA AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House and all Canadians that the month of May has been declared “Allergy-Asthma Awareness Month”.

More than six million Canadians suffer from allergies or asthma. In many cases, their conditions can be life threatening.

The Allergy/Asthma Information Association helps people with allergies and asthma cope with their symptoms and improve their quality of life. It provides educational services as well as support to people with allergies and asthma and their families. Thus far in 2001, this volunteer health organization has been flooded with inquiries from all over the country.

Congratulations to the members of the Allergy/Asthma Information Association on their accomplishments, and best wishes for a successful Allergy-Asthma Awareness Month.

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[English]

NATIONAL FOREST WEEK

Mr. Benoît Serré (Timiskaming—Cochrane, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year we celebrate National Forest Week from May 6 to 12. Canada is richly endowed with 10% of the world's temperate and boreal forests.

[Translation]

A successful future depends on the sustainability of these forests. We are protecting the world's forest resources by using sources that can be replenished for our lumber and wood products.

[English]

Moreover, by moving into the value added wood products market, Canadians continue to benefit from the resource and maintain employment opportunities at home.

[Translation]

At this point in time, the forestry companies are engaged in consultations with aboriginal and environmental organizations with a view to determining what shape the decision-making process will take in future to ensure sustainable forest management.

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[English]

For its part, the Government of Canada is working hard in its role in forestry. It is promoting our forest management practices to increase our access to international markets, as well as contributing to scientific research and development to ensure a sustainable and economically viable forest industry.

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ELIZABETH FRY WEEK

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is National Elizabeth Fry Week and a time to reflect upon the principles that Elizabeth Fry held regarding the treatment of prisoners and their families. We also remember her accomplishments in reforming the prison system of her time.

The majority of female prisoners are the sole caregivers of their families at the time of their arrest. These mothers, during their incarceration, become unable to support their children nor can they even visit with them on a regular basis. Children are sentenced by association when their mothers are jailed.

I am calling on the government to examine this unfortunate situation. It is time we recognized that mother-child separation is a harmful practice with consequences that extend to future generations.

It is time that we take a page from the book of Elizabeth Fry and take steps to reform the system. We must not punish the children of our society for the actions of their parents but provide alternatives that are more understanding to the needs of all involved.

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KOREAN WAR VETERANS

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on the 56th anniversary of VE Day, Canadians would like to think that our government has done all it can to remember our war veterans. I am sad to say that this is not so.

When Korean vets asked the government to contribute to a monument in Korea for next year's 50th anniversary of the end of the Korean war, DND and the Department of Veterans Affairs said they would not. This is an all too familiar story.

Korean vets raised \$110,000 for a life sized bronze replica of a Canadian soldier, and with that monument are two replicas of Korean children each holding 16 maple leaves to symbolize 16 Canadians whose graves could not be located. The names of 516 Canadians who died in Korea will be inscribed, and with them, the

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inscription, which came from the Koreans, “We will never forget you, brave sons of Canada”.

Korea has not forgotten. Too bad our government did.

* * *

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL PALLIATIVE CARE WEEK

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul’s, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform hon. members and Canadians that May 7 to 13 is National Palliative Care Week.

[*English*]

Hospice palliative care is aimed at relieving suffering and improving the quality of life for persons who are living with or dying from advanced illness. This type of care includes the person and the family in planning treatment and care so they can make choices based on knowledge and understanding.

Hospice palliative care offers social, emotional and spiritual support to the person as well as the family from members of a diverse team that includes physicians, nurses, social workers, home care planners, volunteers and other therapists.

Please join me in commending the dedicated volunteers, caregivers and professionals who provide hospice palliative care and the Canadian Palliative Care Association and its affiliates that are working to ensure the comfort and dignity of the dying and their families.

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[*Translation*]

ALEXANDRA SOROCÉANU

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the old saying that one can go far without having lived long truly applies to a young 18 year old student from the Séminaire de Sherbrooke, Alexandra Sorocéanu, who was the big winner of the Quebec finals of the science fair known as Expo-sciences.

Her analysis and popularization of a study on the expression of a protein in people who are diabetic or glucose intolerant not only impressed jury members, but earned her an invitation to the International Engineering and Science Fair to be held in California in July. Alexandra will also take part in the Canadian finals, which will take place in Kingston, from May 13 to 20.

Alexandra, who wants to attend medical school, developed an interest for that profession by volunteering for several years in a hospital, in geriatric care.

This is a person who deserves our admiration and who is a fine illustration of Quebec youth, which makes us proud and has the potential to build tomorrow’s Quebec.

Congratulations Alexandra.

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SOCIÉTÉ ZOOLOGIQUE DE SAINT-FÉLICIEN

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 4, the Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec announced a contribution of nearly \$10 million to the Société zoologique de Saint-Félicien for the construction of the Centre de conservation de la biodiversité boréale.

This major project will put the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region into a world class niche, that of conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable development.

The project will also benefit the regional economy. There is talk of consolidating the 175 existing jobs and creating more.

This is an excellent example of action by our government to develop Quebec’s resource regions in co-operation with dynamic individuals such as Ghislain Gagnon, mayor Bertrand Côté, Adrien Grenier and the whole team.

Congratulations, everyone.

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[*English*]

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is National Nursing Week and time for Canadians to celebrate nursing and nurses’ accomplishments and promote their contribution to the health of Canadians.

Today 230,000 nurses provide care to Canadians in hospitals, clinics and home care settings. Every day and every night nurses do their work to relieve pain, to promote recovery and to provide comfort.

Nurses are indeed a pillar of our health care system. However, the last decade has been a trying time for them. Federal health care cuts led to massive layoffs, a decrease in enrolment in nursing schools and a brain drain to south of the border. Stress and burnout are common among nurses in the current environment.

National Nursing Week is a time for Canadians to recognize nurses and their important contribution. It is also time for the government to restore dignity to this profession.

I ask members to please join me in congratulating and thanking our nurses.

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[Translation]

OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Ms. Hélène Scherrer (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year the TD Bank financial group awards a series of scholarships to recognize outstanding community leadership.

This year, 20 young Canadians will receive scholarships of up to \$50,000. Valérie Côté of the Sainte-Foy CEGEP will be one of them.

Valérie set up a program to collect and distribute school supplies to less fortunate children. In addition, she set up a committee to promote student's self-esteem, including raising awareness of anorexia.

This does not include the hours she spends tutoring or her participation in a mission of humanitarian aid to Mexico. Yesterday, she also received the Governor General's gold medal for academic excellence among the 6,000 students in her CEGEP.

These students are the next generation of young people. To all the winners go our most sincere congratulations.

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[English]

WESTRAY MINE

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, May 9 marks the 10th anniversary of the Westray mine disaster, where 26 miners lost their lives due to gross negligence and a wilful blindness to workplace safety.

It has been almost a year since the justice committee unanimously endorsed a motion directing parliament to amend the criminal code to make directors of businesses truly accountable for the working conditions in any enterprise under their direction.

● (1410)

Now the minister says she wants to consult further with business and industry before she takes any action. The best way for industry to have its say on this issue is to table a draft bill and let industry make its representations to the standing committee.

The Canadian people want parliament to amend the criminal code so that when corporate greed leads to corporate murder, there will be a corresponding corporate accountability and corporate responsibility.

Ten years is long enough. The government should implement the recommendations of the Westray inquiry and should do it in this session of parliament without delay.

[Translation]

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, May 2001 is the 50th anniversary of Mental Health Week in Canada.

To mark this occasion, the Quebec division of the Canadian Mental Health Association is organizing various activities so that the public can learn more about the particular problems of mental health and give them some thought.

Through its mission of promotion and prevention, the Quebec division of the Canadian Mental Health Association is an important partner among the providers of essential services.

This organization carefully harmonizes its activities with the strategies of Quebec's department of health and social services, as set out in the Quebec policy on health and welfare.

We are never immune to mental health problems. Let us remain sensitive to those suffering from such problems and grateful to all those looking after their well-being.

Congratulations to all the members of the Quebec division of the Canadian Mental Health Association, and a big thanks to them for the quality work they do.

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[English]

XAVIER GORDON

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to extend congratulations to an outstanding young constituent of mine, Mr. Xavier Gordon, who is here today to accept the Toronto Dominion Canada Trust scholarship.

Received by only 20 students nationwide, this is one of Canada's most prestigious scholarships, awarded for outstanding community leadership. The award is worth up to \$50,000 for him to attend a Canadian university of his choice.

Xavier's long list of achievements, through persistence and determination, include the founding of a multicultural council at Meadowvale Secondary School. Through his hard work, the interest and participation of both students and teachers has increased dramatically in a wide range of multicultural activities.

Xavier plans a career in aeronautical engineering. I am certain he will achieve any goal he chooses and will reach the very top of his field.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL NURSING WEEK**

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, May 7 to 13 has been dedicated as National Nursing Week. The slogan this year is “Nurses: Champions for Health”.

The Canadian Nurses Association is the professional voice of nursing in Canada. Its purpose is to advance the quality of nursing in the interests of all Canadians. The association is a federation of 11 provincial and territorial nursing associations representing more than 110,000 registered nurses.

We have all at one time or another experienced the kindness, patience, wisdom and competence of our nurses and are grateful for their dedication to our health care.

On behalf of all members, I wish to extend thanks to our nurses across Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Gérard Binet (Frontenac—Mégantic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I inform the House of Canada’s first Information Technology Week.

This initiative is the result of a partnership between the Department of Industry and the Information Technology Association of Canada. Canada is advanced in this field, in terms of both Internet connectivity and innovation in the use of information technologies.

In 50 years, this sector has become the fastest growing in Canada, which has a positive impact on other industries and encourages the development of Canadian communities.

This week will be a celebration of Canadian skills and achievements in information technology. All Canadian communities are invited to participate in the various activities: symposiums, workshops, exhibits, contests and more.

Long live Canada’s Information Technology Week.

* * *

[English]

CRYSTAL SIEMENS

Ms. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the talent and dedication of a young woman from Saskatchewan, Crystal Siemens. Crystal was recently named fashion designer of the year by the city of Toronto.

Growing up in rural Saskatchewan, Crystal moved to Toronto in 1985 to attend Ryerson Polytechnic in its well respected fashion program. Ever since she has been a force to be reckoned with,

starting with her own signature line of clothing and following that up last year with her uniform 808 line.

• (1415)

Crystal is looking to expand this year by moving to Vancouver and then to Montreal. She hopes to move west to the rest of North America and then to the eastern and western hemispheres.

Crystal is the daughter of proud parents George and Pat Siemens of Fiske in my riding of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar. I join George and Pat in congratulating Crystal on her award and in wishing her the best of luck in what looks like a very bright future indeed.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

NATIONAL DRINKING WATER STANDARDS

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in the 2000 red book there are some interesting quotes from the Liberals. They go to great lengths to tell Canadians that they are concerned about water safety and security.

On page 20 of the red book they go as far as to promise real action on water safety and security. They obviously saw the need then. The need is even more acute today. When will the federal government take real action on water safety and security for municipalities across the country?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have put forward, and it is an application at this time, a \$2.6 billion program as the federal portion of provincial, municipal and federal action.

We have said that we want this money to be used for programs like water safety. Whenever there are applications by municipal and provincial governments we will be very happy to pay our third out of this fund.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, many studies including a recent one from McGill point out that Canada’s water system is the oldest and most dilapidated of the entire aging infrastructure in our municipalities. That has been since the red book.

We need to know if the federal government has the increase in funds that will be required to meet the true need on a priority list. Where does that fit on its list of priorities?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the red book of the last election we talked about it. We put in \$2.6 billion effective January 1, 2001.

Oral Questions

When the provincial and municipal governments have projects to improve the quality of the water in their localities, the federal government will be very happy to pay one-third of the cost.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister indicated today that he has never discussed with the finance minister the parliamentary reforms we are reading about in the newspaper.

It is a great opportunity today for him to get a jump on the finance minister in terms of parliamentary reform by indicating to us whether he will allow his MPs to vote freely today on behalf of their constituents on the issue of water safety and security.

It is an issue that is coming up right away. I know he is resisting the urge to say something else, but will he allow his MPs to vote freely on this issue today and get a head start on the finance minister?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we always have discussions within the party. We have had more free votes under this administration than ever before.

When we look at the previous seven years there has been a lot more free votes on this side than on the other side and less members have been kicked out of caucus.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, you will notice that there was no answer to that question. Just a few months ago the government House leader and the member for Toronto—Danforth had been exploring a very interesting idea of a parliamentary committee on the issue of water.

That seemed like a pretty good idea to this side, and it turned out the Prime Minister said no way. Will he say today that a parliamentary committee on water would be an excellent idea? Yes or no.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the House leaders' meeting will be this afternoon at 3.30 p.m. I am very much looking forward to the meeting this afternoon to discuss this and any other issue.

The hon. member said that it was this side of the House that refused it before. He should get his facts straight by speaking to his own colleague.

• (1420)

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let us get this plain and clear. The member for Toronto—Danforth and the House leader approached with an idea and that idea did not go through.

Will these two individuals, along with the support of the Prime Minister, today commit that we will have a parliamentary committee on the issue of water? Yes or no.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know which part of yes

the hon. member does not understand this afternoon. We have indicated before that this is what we wanted. We are still obviously in favour of that which we wanted. Let us hope that is the case.

In any event, the hon. member can listen to the deliberations later this day or consult his own colleague to see whether yes is something that is agreeable to everyone else.

* * *

[Translation]

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the Quebec City summit, the Prime Minister declared that chapter 11 of NAFTA governing disputes between investors and government worked well.

Yet the Prime Minister should know that Canada is accumulating setbacks under chapter 11. Following Ethyl Corporation and S.D. Myers, a tribunal has found in favour of Metalclad over Mexico, in a matter of expropriation, despite Canada's opinion to the contrary and its intervention.

In the light of all these examples, will the Prime Minister acknowledge that chapter 11 creates problems, since it severely restricts countries' sovereignty?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I repeat that we have an agreement with the United States and Mexico. NAFTA was established in 1994. There are a few cases where we did not win.

I said, and I repeat, that in all of the trade we have, for example, with the United States, which amounts to over \$1 billion a day, the number of cases is not very great.

We have said that when we negotiate the agreement with all the Americas, this chapter will be re-examined by all the other countries, and we will be in a position to assess—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it would be worth knowing the Canadian position, especially in reference to the last case mentioned, that of Metalclad, in which the Mexican town of Guadalupe, which wanted to establish an ecological reserve and denied Metalclad a permit for its toxic waste burial site, will have to pay out compensation in the amount of \$25.5 million.

Since the Prime Minister sees only petty disputes under chapter 11, does he find it fair that a country has to pay out millions of dollars to a company that wants to establish a dump—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not in a position at the moment to analyze the situation in Mexico and whether land acquired has been expropriated and permits have been given.

I think, in the case of Canada, we have been well served. There is always room for improvement, but under the relations that we have, for example with the United States, the number of cases is minuscule, compared with the volume of our exchanges with them.

As I said, and I repeat, in the negotiations with the countries of the Americas, all the countries will have an opinion on this chapter, and we will see whether we need to change it.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in addition to those three defeats Canada has sustained, there is the UPS case. This delivery company is taking the federal government to court for \$230 million in damages.

UPS's claim under NAFTA, chapter 11, is that Canada Post's courier service is unfair competition to it.

Does the Prime Minister still maintain there is no problem with chapter 11, when the integrity of a public service as essential as Canada Post is in danger?

[English]

Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has said and as the minister has repeated, given the full context of our trade with the United States, chapter 11 is working reasonably well.

The opposition cited the case of Metalclad just a moment ago. It is interesting to hear the president of Metalclad decrying the fact that he sees the ruling as a loss for his company.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, until very recently, the government's web site said, to quote from this famous Internet site, "Canada is not advocating the replication of NAFTA investor-state rules in the FTAA". Strange to say, this position on investments has disappeared from that site.

Could the Prime Minister tell us what position on chapter 11 the Minister for International Trade has gone to Washington to defend today in his meetings with his Mexican and American counterparts?

• (1425)

[English]

Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague has noted, the minister is having the opportunity this week to raise the issue of chapter 11 and other issues with trade representative Zoellick and with his Mexican counterpart.

The fact of the matter is, as the Prime Minister has said, the clause works reasonably well. One would think the sky was falling, to listen to the Bloc. There is a grand total of five cases involving Canada. Quite frankly we have done pretty well in these disputes.

* * *

NATIONAL DRINKING WATER STANDARDS

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of Canada's most eminent ecologists and water experts, David Schindler, said last year that water quality had become another casualty of federalism. That would seem to be what happened to the Tory motion today, that it has become a casualty of federalism.

Does the Prime Minister not see that what is needed in the country at the moment and what there is a mandate for in parliament and across the country is national leadership on the establishment of national enforceable standards, not guidelines but standards? Will the Prime Minister show some leadership in this regard and say that he will lead Canada into a century of clean water?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just explained that we have a program of infrastructure that is available to all municipalities to improve the quality of water everywhere in Canada. It is there.

The hon. member says that we should not respect the constitution. We can have national standards but we cannot impose them unilaterally. We have to discuss with the provinces, but the water supply is generally speaking a responsibility first of the municipalities and after that of the provincial governments. We have established some guidelines that we invite all provinces to follow. If they want, we would be very happy to make them a federal law.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I say to the Prime Minister there is no constitutional mandate that he has to only offer one-third of the cost for a lot of the infrastructure development that needs to go into place. Why can they not up what they are prepared to share in terms of the cost?

While they are at it, why do they not do it in their own jurisdiction on aboriginal reserves where they do not have any provinces to deal with? That is a place where the federal government can establish an example that provinces could follow and do on reserves what needs to be done right across the country: have standards and have them enforced.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as far as the federal government is concerned in our own jurisdiction. Where we are responsible, we take the necessary steps. In the case of northern Saskatchewan it is not an Indian reserve. It is a municipality within the responsibility of the Saskatchewan government, an NDP government.

Oral Questions

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Will the minister tell the House whether the government would agree to act immediately with the provinces and territories respecting their jurisdiction to ensure enforceable national drinking water standards, not guidelines, that would be enshrined in a safe water act?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member that I am prepared to work with my provincial partners toward making sure that Canadians have the safest drinking water possible.

The House has heard the word leadership over the last couple of minutes in connection with water. The way the government and the Prime Minister have shown leadership is by having twice annual meetings with provincial governments to talk about the guidelines on water safety. We continue to do that. Provinces then meet their responsibilities to make sure water is delivered safely to Canadians.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the tenor of the Minister of Health's response but, having said that, Canadians are looking for more leadership from the federal government.

What is the Government of Canada prepared to do to expedite the concern of Canadians over their drinking water?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to continue working with provinces to make sure we have a consensus on levels of concentration of chemicals and other materials in water to keep Canadians healthy and to make sure they have the drinking water they need. That is what we have been doing for the last eight years with provincial governments.

I am quite happy, as I have already said, to work with my provincial counterparts and ask them if they think that their job of delivering that water would be made easier if they had a federal statute.

• (1430)

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Prime Minister would care to stand today in his place and make a commitment that communities in crisis, such as North Battleford, will get immediate emergency, and I stress emergency, federal funding to resolve their water crisis. Will he do that today?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in North Battleford, just as last year in Walkerton, Health Canada has sent in emergency teams to work with provincial and municipal authorities to do the chemical analysis, to try to find the source of the problem and to provide assistance to those in need. Health Canada is proud to be part of that team. We are working very well with the people of North Battleford and we look forward to that continued collaboration.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we already know what the problem is and it will take \$20 million to fix it.

I want to ask the government to do something today. Will it step up to the bar and come up with some emergency funding to help us avert this crisis? It will take \$20 million. Is the government up to the challenge?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the hon. member that in the most recent of the two infrastructure programs the government has invested in, we have committed \$56 million to Saskatchewan alone, and that was just our share. That was one-third of the total outlay to put in new water and sewage treatment plants, and new infrastructure in cities and towns. It comes to a total of over \$150 million when all three governments' contributions are combined. I believe that is a very significant contribution. We are prepared to continue along those lines.

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[Translation]

FRANCOPHONE DEPUTY MINISTERS

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, under this government, the number of francophone deputy ministers is constantly declining. Francophone deputy ministers now account for only 22% of the total, that is seven out of 31.

How does the government explain this drastic decline in the number of francophones holding positions of authority in the public service, with the proportion of francophone deputy ministers having gone from 32% to 20%?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we must take into account all the senior positions in the public service, because some assistant deputy ministers have more responsibilities than deputy ministers.

Francophones account for 41.2% of all associate deputy ministers. Overall, francophones account for 29.2%, while they make up 24% of the population. Francophones are very well represented in the public service.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, his deputy ministers will be proud of him.

When francophone deputy ministers accounted for 32% of the total number of deputy ministers, a political scientist, who is now the minister responsible for official languages, said that this situation reflected the government's political will to improve the fate of francophones.

Oral Questions

Following the same logic today, how can we not conclude that there is a blatant lack of political will on the part of this government to improve the situation of francophones in the country, since the number of them holding positions of authority is constantly declining?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 29% is more than the percentage of francophones in the overall population. I wonder if anglophones account for 29% of all deputy ministers in Quebec City.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DRINKING WATER STANDARDS

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it has finally happened: Beware of drinking water. More and more Canadians are under a boil water order and are being told not to drink water from the tap. As usual, it seems as though the government has no plans.

Will the government take a leadership role and together with the provinces and territories develop a comprehensive plan on safe water?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government provides leadership by sitting with provincial authorities, health experts and scientists to make sure there are guidelines in place to assist provinces in their responsibility to provide safe drinking water.

I cannot let the question pass without observing that when we introduced legislation some years ago, Bill C-14, to deal with a federal responsibility, namely the quality of the materials through which the water passes, that party opposed it and said that the legislation was unnecessary. I gather it has changed its tune.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that party is good at passing the buck, blaming someone else and blaming the provinces.

• (1435)

We are talking about leadership. We are talking about taking a plan and putting the plan into effect.

We hear about the dollars are being sent to the provinces and the municipalities, \$4 billion dollars. They say it is not getting to them. The municipalities say they need over \$16 billion just to handle the problems they have now. When will the government live up to its commitment?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are happy to debate ideas but we do think that gamesmanship is really unnecessary.

Let us look at the Alliance Party's position on this very issue when I introduced Bill C-14. The member for Macleod said:

Doom and gloom is always wonderful, but Canadians do enjoy a pretty good standard of drinking water. Maybe some individuals who say that environmental legislation is totally ineffective should reflect upon the success we have had.

The member went on to say, referring to my bill at the time:

This bill is unnecessary. This bill is intrusive. This bill is potentially expensive.

What a change we have had across the way.

* * *

[Translation]

STATISTICS CANADA

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this year's Statistics Canada census will not yield any valid data on ethnic or cultural origin, because it deliberately skews responses by offering the additional category of Canadian, which has no scientific basis whatsoever.

Does the Prime Minister realize that the cabinet's manipulation of the census questions makes it impossible to monitor the rate of assimilation of this country's francophones?

[English]

Mr. John Cannis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no manipulation when it comes to questions. As a matter of fact let me quote the privacy commissioner who feels very confident with what is happening. He said "I am satisfied that the questions are reasonable and appropriate from the point of view of privacy".

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the minister did not understand my question, does the Prime Minister realize that the government's manipulations are in the process of transforming a scientific tool into a propaganda tool and, furthermore, cast doubt on the very principle of the independence of Statistics Canada?

[English]

Mr. John Cannis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only propaganda we hear comes from the Bloc Quebecois side not the Liberal government side. I am sad the Bloc Quebecois has taken this initiative to collect the statistics and to manipulate them.

Let me repeat again what the privacy commissioner said. He said "I am satisfied that the questions are reasonable and appropriate from the point of view of privacy. I am satisfied that all appropriate safeguards are in place to protect the privacy of individuals".

GOVERNMENT LOANS

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the industry minister said in the House that a \$32 million loan to Buhler Versatile Inc. was a simple transfer of an existing loan. Wrong. The truth is the new loan has a lot more zeros: zero interest rate owing, zero security, zero jobs, zero respect for the Canadian taxpayer.

The political criteria for the loan was that it delayed layoffs in a Liberal riding until after the last federal election. What other criteria if any must a company meet in order to receive a gift like this from Industry Canada?

Mr. John Cannis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the former Conservative, former Reform and now Alliance member is wrong, wrong, wrong. This loan, which had no guarantees attached to it, was given in 1987 by the former Conservative government. The premier and industry minister of Manitoba wrote to this government asking them to support the transfer.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there is incredible ignorance on that side of the House on this issue.

Since the member obviously does not know, nor do any of the other members it seems, I would like to inform them that BVI is a wholly owned subsidiary of Buhler Industries. It was created solely for the purpose of assuming a \$32 million loan. BVI never owned the plant or the plant assets. The plant assets cannot be taken back as payment if BVI cannot pay the loan. At the time BVI received the unsecured loan, totally unsecured, it had total assets of \$100. I have to ask on behalf of the Canadian taxpayers and the members of the Canadian Alliance, why did—

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry.

• (1440)

Mr. John Cannis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad he used the word unsecured because that is what that party is all about today. The loan was unsecured thanks to the former Conservative government.

Let me quote what the premier of Manitoba asked. “The consequences of the Buhler bid did not begin—”

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, I want to answer the question but the Conservative Party here feels threatened.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order, please. The parliamentary secretary wants to answer and we all want to hear the answer.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, maybe that is why it is now the fifth party.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I can only help the parliamentary secretary so far.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians are celebrating National Forest Week, I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources.

As hon. members know, a great many Canadians rely on our forests for their well-being. With the increased demand on our forest land, will Canadians be able to count on our forests to contribute so much to our way of life in the future?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite right to draw attention to National Forest Week.

Nearly half of Canada's land mass is covered by forests. We are home to 10% of all the world's forests. The sector employs more than 750,000 Canadians in more than 350 communities and contributes nearly \$20 billion to Canada's GDP, plus immense social, cultural and environmental value.

All Canadians must be dedicated to sustainable forest management, as is the government. To get the full story, people can consult the Government of Canada online at www.nrcan.gc.ca.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of National Defence.

The minister knows that this week George Bush's officials are in Canada lobbying for the national missile defence, the new star wars, and that last year his officials stated in a briefing paper that while NMD does not require Canadian involvement, intercepts would occur over Canadian territory.

U.S. defence analysts have said that Canada might want to request extra funding for hard hats, but that there is not much else that can be done. The debris will not fall on Toronto, we hope, but who knows?

I want to ask the minister when the government will finally stand up to the United States and say no to this insane escalation—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United States is concerned, as we all should be concerned, about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Whether or not this is an appropriate response is one that will be determined over the next few months in terms of consultation that is now being undertaken.

Canada will be part of that consultation, as will many other countries. We want to know the specifics of what the United States has in mind. It has a broad range of options. It is important that we know what its intentions are so that we will be in a position to then make a rational decision on the matter.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for four years I have been pressing the government to pay attention to the drug health crisis in Vancouver's downtown east side. Thousands of lives have been needlessly lost and public safety is at risk.

The Minister of Health expresses sympathy but people are still dying. Now even the head of the RCMP drug enforcement program is calling on the government to look at safe injection sites as part of a comprehensive strategy.

Will the Minister of Health finally save lives by taking action on this matter and supporting safe injection sites?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with Mayor Owen who has shown real leadership in Vancouver with his report on the options available to deal with this tragic issue.

We have met with the mayor and have examined his proposals. I know he is consulting on them now. We have put money into the community to develop a resource centre. We will continue to work with local authorities to find the best solution possible.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that rural Canada has been under siege in the last number of years.

The Canada infrastructure program that was announced last year does have a component for rural communities to improve their water treatment plants but the demands far exceed the amount of dollars there.

• (1445)

Will the minister responsible for rural Canada commit today that funding will be put into place which will allow rural communities to have the same dependable safe water as urban communities?

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Secretary of State (Rural Development)(Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite right. The Canada provincial infrastructure program this time does include a component for rural Canada so that the infrastructure in rural Canada can be upgraded, as well as the infrastructure in the rest of the country.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Prime Minister is troubled by the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe, including the intimidation of Canada's high commissioner and the director of CARE.

The foreign minister told parliament last week that a response to Zimbabwe by Canada might wait until the next Commonwealth heads of government meeting some months away.

Bearing in mind the leadership that Canada showed in fighting apartheid, would the Prime Minister not agree at least to call home the Canadian high commissioner to Zimbabwe for consultations and consider other urgent action now?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will look into this possibility. If it is a useful thing to do, we will do it.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, having met over the weekend in Manitoba with former employees of the Sagkeeng Reserve Virginia Fontaine treatment centre, I am appalled over the lack of accountability of the facility by Health Canada officials and the inability to treat the substance abuse of patients.

Now we have learned that Health Canada officials are refusing to turn over vital documents to the RCMP in order to complete the pending forensic audit.

The Minister of Indian Affairs and North Development can talk all he wants about accountability, but how can Canadians believe the government when they see this kind of thing happening?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are three things. First, this is the minister who shut down funding to that centre when we could not be satisfied the money was being used properly.

Second, we undertook a forensic audit. That will continue and will be completed.

Third, we have given every document to the RCMP that it needs to do its investigation and we hope it now gets it done.

Oral Questions

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I invite the Minister of Health and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to sit down with some of these former employees and they will hear the real story.

While many past employees of the Virginia Fontaine treatment centre wanted to treat substance abusers, the truth is that there was a lack of trained staff and helpful programs in place to do anything about the problem.

The past employees with whom I spoke on the weekend compared it to a babysitting service. Why did Health Canada officials fail to recognize these problems long ago and take action to make sure those who needed the help really received it?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were satisfied that the services being provided were of the quality that is appropriate for centres of that kind.

Let me add another thing for the hon. member. We have centres across the country. For example, some of them are now treating some of the children from the Innu communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu which are making a real contribution to the safety, the health and the lives of those kids. Health Canada is proud of the work we are doing in that regard.

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[Translation]

STATISTICS CANADA

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the census is one of the tools used by the government to enforce the Official Languages Act and identify the needs of communities throughout Canada.

Will the Prime Minister admit that it is very worrying to see the minister responsible for the application of the Official Languages Act endorsing the manipulation of scientific data concerning the ethnic and cultural origin of citizens who complete the census?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada is an organization which has built up an excellent reputation over the years and which conducts the census in the best interest of all Canadians. The nature of questions must take into account all the laws of parliament, including the law on the right to privacy.

Under the circumstances, I think that Statistics Canada is doing its best, and we believe that the statistics will, in any event, tell us the percentage of francophones in Canada.

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the manipulation of such sensitive figures will mean that thousands of people, particularly Acadians and francophones, may no longer appear in the official data.

Does the Prime Minister realize that this manipulation is one more thing that will distort the real figures on the rate of assimilation of francophones, thus opening the door in the medium term to a decrease in bilingual government services?

• (1450)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone is entirely free to indicate their mother tongue in this questionnaire. All francophones and others may indicate their mother tongue. Some may refuse to do so and that is apparently their decision.

However Statistics Canada is taking the necessary steps to ensure that we have the best statistics possible in the circumstances.

* * *

[English]

TRANSPORT

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last week Canadian travellers saw their choice in airlines reduced yet again when Air Canada announced that it intended to acquire a substantial share of Roots Air. This is clearly an attempt by Air Canada to enter the discount airline market by the back door.

Discount carriers like WestJet and Canada 3000 could now face competition from two Air Canada airlines. Given the dominant position of Air Canada and this latest blow to the freedom of choice, what action is the minister prepared to take now to ensure fair competition?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that the air restructuring process has gone remarkably well because there is competition. There is choice on all major city fares in Canada and prices have come down.

The problem with Roots Air is indeed distressing to all of us that want competition. The commissioner of the competition bureau has said that he will treat this as a full merger and will look into it.

As Minister of Transport empowered under the act that was passed last year, Transport Canada has the ability to look into the public interest. We are very concerned about this development.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly glad that the minister is concerned. Last week's demise of Roots Air proves that small carriers cannot compete with Air Canada on major routes.

This morning the standing committee on transport heard testimony from the competition bureau that Air Canada did not currently face effective competition on a national basis and that the provisions of the Competition Act would not be sufficient to create a competitive domestic market.

Oral Questions

Is the minister now prepared to create real competition by allowing limited entry of foreign airlines into the Canadian market?

Hon. David Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is consistent with their right wing friends for cabotage.

However let me say this. The United States government, the United States carriers and the United States air unions are not interested in serving point to point within Canada. There is some limited interest on the part of Virgin Atlantic to do that.

Once we allow any of those foreign carriers in, we know what they will do. They will run on the main trunk routes where the money is to be made: Toronto to Vancouver and Toronto to Calgary. Who will suffer? It will be WestJet. It will be Canada 3000 and it will be Air Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Canadians in rural and remote communities face unique health needs and challenges.

Could the minister tell this House what innovative action the Government of Canada is taking to address those needs?

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle for his question.

It affords me the opportunity to announce the Government of Canada's commitment to better meeting the unique needs of rural and remote communities.

Just last Friday, the Minister of Health and the Secretary of State for Rural Development announced \$440,000 for three rural health projects in Shawville, Quebec. This is part of the \$50 million Innovations in Rural and Community Health Initiatives.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last Friday the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board stated that no legislative changes were required to give organic growers an exemption from the Canadian Wheat Board's marketing system. However a published paper of the Canadian Wheat Board states:

If an exemption were presented as an option to farmers it could not be done right away since there is no clause in CWB legislation to allow an exemption and the legislation would therefore have to be amended.

Is it necessary to change the Canadian Wheat Board legislation to allow exemptions from the monopoly? Yes or no.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I pointed out in the House last week was that when the original legislation to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act was put forward in the predecessor to Bill C-4, we attempted to include a specific procedure for dealing with the jurisdiction of the board, either the expansion or the diminution of that jurisdiction.

It was at the insistence of the opposition that explicit procedure was removed from the draft legislation.

• (1455)

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, if the minister would have listened to the opposition we would have a voluntary Canadian Wheat Board today.

Ron Tetoff is an organic producer in Kamsack, Saskatchewan. In February he had arranged a sale to a buyer in Europe that would have given him \$9 a bushel for organic wheat at his farm gate. The sale fell through and Mr. Tetoff was forced to go through the Canadian Wheat Board's buyback system.

The price the board charged him for his own grain made it impossible for Mr. Tetoff to complete his sale to Europe. Why is the government stifling value added organic farmers like Mr. Tetoff?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I make the point that the place to begin the dialogue with respect to the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board is with the duly elected directors of the Canadian Wheat Board where farmers make the decision and not politicians.

I point out that on December 8 of last year the Canadian Wheat Board board of directors announced a new producer direct sale program for organic producers. Producers will now have an expanded and improved option for marketing their organic wheat and barley themselves.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA INFORMATION OFFICE

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after the ministerial tours in Quebec paid for with public funds, we are now learning that the government is using the financial resources of the

Oral Questions

Canada Information Office, the CIO, to conduct a poll for political purposes, this for a mere \$193,000.

Will the minister of public works admit that this further evidence that the government is using the CIO's resources for partisan purposes and that it confuses the interest of its party with that of the public?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CIO has been conducting polls three times a year, in January, May and October, since 1998. This is the ninth poll. Therefore, these polls are not partisan measures connected with an election.

I also remind the hon. member that these polls are available to all, since they are on the CIO's Internet site.

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[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the infrastructure program in western Canada. Why is the federal government taking so long to make funding decisions under the Canada-Saskatchewan infrastructure program?

People are looking for answers because communities such as North Battleford need help to deal with their problems right now.

Hon. Ronald Duhamel (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Francophonie), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a number of decisions have already been made. There will be a number of additional decisions this coming Friday.

Let us remember that the deadline for applications on the first round was February 1. Over 1,500 applications have been received from western Canada, roughly 600 of them for pure water and water disposal projects. I think that is extraordinary.

I might add that by the end of the program six years from now over \$6 billion will have been spent throughout Canada, with \$2 billion for western Canada.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Doyle Kemp, like a growing number of wheat farmers in Saskatchewan, is now a registered organic grower.

He has found his own market. He has found a customer who wants to buy 3,000 bushels of his organically grown durum wheat, but before he can make that sale he has to turn over \$1,750 to the Canadian Wheat Board. That is what is called a buyback. Why does

the government continue to penalize western farmers for diversification?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I invite the hon. gentleman and his constituents to discuss the procedure directly with the board of directors of the Canadian Wheat Board.

I would also point out, as I said in response to a previous question, that under the directions of the Canadian Wheat Board there is now a producer direct sale program in place with a lower administrative charge that can be of assistance in these circumstances.

* * *

● (1500)

[Translation]

SPACE SHIELD

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two American experts on nuclear armament and anti-missile defence will soon meet with Canadian officials.

Today, the leader of the Bloc Quebecois sent a letter to the Prime Minister in which he asked for a meeting with these two envoys.

Could the Prime Minister tell us if he intends to respond favourably to the request made by the leader of the Bloc Quebecois by making it possible for opposition parties to meet these two experts and thus get all the information available?

[English]

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take that matter under advisement. It is still to be determined as to what the schedule will be of the consultation and at what levels the consultation will occur.

I want to assure the hon. member that ultimately this parliament will play a key role in dealing with the matter of missile defence decisions.

* * *

NURSING

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat ironic and telling, in this week set aside to honour the work of the nursing profession, that a report has just been released showing that nurses face higher injury rates than police or firefighters and are more likely to miss work due to illness or disability.

Is the Minister of Health, in this week of all weeks, prepared to start addressing the serious situation facing nurses in Canada today, put in place a national strategy and deal with the nursing shortage.

Supply

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to bring the member up to date. I was present this morning in Toronto for the launch of that excellent report by the Canadian Institutes of Health Information for which provincial and federal governments paid.

On the question of nursing, the information in the report today reflects the situation on the ground. Last September and October I worked with provincial ministers to develop a national strategy on nursing in Canada in order to address many of these very problems we have talked about.

I also opened an office of nursing policy at Health Canada so we could have someone available to the federal Minister of Health to make sure that the nursing perspective would be reflected as we go about the business of managing health care.

loo had with cryptosporidium and giardia around the mid-1990s. In Kelowna there was an outbreak in 1996 of cryptosporidium.

This is not new. We have known about the problem for at least a decade. What has the government done about it? Not an awful lot. It has pointed the finger at the provinces because it is a provincial jurisdiction, but it needs to show more leadership. Canadians expect their health to be protected. Consumption of potable water is part of that health and safety need.

Our water systems and water treatment plants, for those communities that have them, go back to the 1950s vintage. That was when most of them were built. There are a lot of communities that do not have water treatment systems. They rely on surface water or well water. In fact inclusive in the topic of debate today, we really should be looking at the whole issue of sewage treatment because sewage facilities built back in the 1950s and the early 1960s are all falling apart today. In other words, they will and have become a problem to the environment just as much as to potable water.

In 1995 a boil water order was issued for Dauphin, which is where I come from. At that time I was the mayor. Obviously when people cannot drink the water what can they do? Little does one realize that without water there is not a lot one can do. However when people have to boil the water to use it, it creates a lot of difficulties.

Imagine a community being under threat of not having potable water for a period of almost two years. That is why I believe there needs to be an emergency funding provision put in place by the federal government for communities, such as North Battleford, that need it. In essence, one of the key responsibilities for the federal government is to provide tax dollars to build these facilities.

• (1510)

Building water treatment facilities are not ordinary mundane activities at the municipal level. It takes huge amounts of dollars. In the case of Dauphin, Manitoba, we were very fortunate, through the PFRA and through the co-operation of a fellow by the name of Erminio Calagary, we managed to get the support of the federal government, the provincial government and the municipal government to put the dollars together and built a brand new water treatment plant. It amounted to something like \$9 million.

That \$9 million to a community of about 10,000 people is a huge tax load. It is easy for the federal government to say that it will throw some money here and there through its infrastructure program and hopefully then tripartite agreements will get some money to build water treatment plants or sewage plants.

I was very deeply involved with the 1993 infrastructure program. That money was distributed on a per capita basis, which did not account to very much especially when we knew the cost of water treatment facilities. The federal government has to ante up. After all that the money does belong to the people.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1505)

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—NATIONAL DRINKING WATER STANDARDS

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to take part in the debate on water.

Let me begin by commending the member for Fundy—Royal on his motion. I believe it is long overdue. Unfortunately, it takes a tragedy to bring attention to this most basic of human needs. I find it almost unbelievable that after the tragic experience in Walkerton, we are now experiencing the same kind of problems in North Battleford. What we see demonstrates that we require more leadership, certainly on the part of government.

I would like to take us back to pre-Walkerton history. As the former mayor of Dauphin, I had to live through the same kind of experience, so I will speak from my experience as a municipal leader who had to shepherd a community through an outbreak in giardia back in 1995.

If we look at the records in 1993, Milwaukee, Wisconsin had a cryptosporidium outbreak which took many lives. We called it legionnaires' disease. Then on we go to Waterloo. An hon. member across the floor mentioned this morning the problems that Water-

Supply

I agree with the FCM, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and its lobby to ensure that fresh or potable water is always available to all communities. There are over 4,000 municipalities. The FCM resolution number 26, which was adopted in the year 2000, states:

—reaffirm its commitment to the protection of public health in all aspects of the provision of water for human consumption, including the protection of drinking water or drinking water sources.

Further to this statement, perhaps it is time the federal Liberal government recognize and acknowledge the legitimacy of the municipalities of this country.

I still remember in 1996 listening to the Prime Minister in Calgary. He stated that the municipalities played a huge role in this country, that they were very important, that they were the first level of government and that they were closest to the people. I am still waiting for the Prime Minister of the day to recognize the legitimacy of the municipalities. Until that happens, the municipalities will always be bantered about between the provinces and the federal government.

As we know, the provinces always say the municipalities are the children of the provinces and that the federal government has no business dealing with them. It is long overdue, when it comes to health care and water issues, that the municipalities be at the table. It is no different than if the topic of discussion was roads.

Therefore, water is essential and it impacts all of us. It is time the federal government recognized that water should be treated the same way blood is treated. When we get a transfusion most of us think the blood is safe. Likewise, when we pick up a glass of water we should not question the safety of that glass of water. As we know, that is not the case at this point in time.

I would like to talk about the lack of support for potable water development for aboriginal reservations. In my riding I have 13 reservations and I know that they are in dire need of infrastructure development. In fact, when will the federal government move on this? Hopefully it will not wait for someone to lose their life before it makes some concerted effort to deal with the deplorable conditions of drinking water on many of the reserves.

I have many Metis communities in my riding. Health Canada has to put its foot down and be more assertive in making sure that funds go to water and sewage infrastructure development in those communities, rather than just handing the money over to the Metis provincial organizations and letting them give out the money. In many cases basic issues like water and sewage are left out altogether.

• (1515)

We need specific programs for water and sewage. The government should avoid the word infrastructure. In the last round of

debate the definition of the term was wide open and infrastructure dollars were used in many areas. A government that wants to lead and be accountable should set up water and sewage programs. If we do not do it at this point it will be the tip of the iceberg in terms of the problems that confront Canadians.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member on his remarks. He is on a similar page with the Progressive Conservatives on the issue. Last week at the immigration committee we were more often than not on the same page as well.

He touched on the need for the federal government to protect water quality on Indian reserves. The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth said in the House today that we could make a model for Canadians based on how we handle water on reserves.

The Yellow Quill Indian reserve in northeastern Saskatchewan close to Kelvington has had a boil water advisory since 1995. As the reserve is under exclusive federal jurisdiction, I ask the hon. member if he believes the Government of Canada should clean up its own act and address the situation.

Mr. Inky Mark: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I lived in a community that had a boil water order for two years and could not imagine what it is like to have a boil water order for six years.

There is a lack of commitment on the part of the government. If the government sees a problem it must deal with it and not make excuses. People on reserves need to be treated no differently than people off reserves. Until the government takes its responsibilities seriously nothing will change.

In terms of the whole country it is the same thing. If the government understands the need for potable water and good sewage facilities across the nation it must change its current position and approach. It needs to take action, not put money into fancy programs for political purposes. If the government understands the importance of the issue it must do the work that is asked of it.

That can only be demonstrated through action. The government must make long term commitments. It must have plans in place. It must sit and talk to people to find out what their needs are. The government has sole responsibility for Indian reserves and it has no excuse for not dealing with problems that affect them.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member has been involved in municipal politics and we are talking today about municipal water supplies. I have a difficult question for him about jurisdiction. These issues should be dealt with primarily among municipalities and perhaps provinces.

To what extent does the hon. member want the federal government involved in organizing municipal water infrastructure?

Supply

• (1520)

Mr. Inky Mark: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Elk Island for his question. The issue with both water and sewage facilities is money. Application of the act falls under provincial jurisdiction. Most provinces have their own water acts. However the cost of facilities is out of reach for municipalities which do not have the resources.

If we deem water and sewage an essential health and safety issue we should treat it no differently than public health. The responsibility therefore lies with the federal government. Municipalities do not have the tax base. We cannot expect communities to boil their water for decades if they cannot come up with the money for infrastructure.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I say at the outset that I intend to share my time with the hon. member for Mississauga West. I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate today and I thank the member for Fundy Royal for framing it by tabling his motion.

I begin by expressing, I know on behalf of all members of the House of Commons, our concern and sympathy for the residents of North Battleford who this week are dealing with an unexpected and what must seem an overwhelming burden. Health Canada is working alongside municipal and provincial officials in North Battleford to provide what assistance we can to that beleaguered municipality.

I intend to vote in favour of the motion as amended, but I will make some comments explaining why. I will also respond to the suggestion which has underlain most of the discussion from the opposition benches that in some way the Government of Canada is not fulfilling its obligation to ensure clean drinking water. That is simply not true.

The Government of Canada has fulfilled completely its obligation as a partner in the federation to work with those who have responsibility for delivering fresh, clean water. We have taken a number of steps and are active in a variety of ways. We are working with provincial and municipal governments in that effort.

I will identify five of these steps in the few moments available to me. First, we are contributing to the cost of maintaining appropriate water and sewage treatment facilities so that local municipalities, rural and urban, have facilities to treat water and make it suitable for human use.

Last year the federal budget identified \$2 billion to be available over five years through the infrastructure program to help provinces and municipalities in this effort. When that money is leveraged by matching funds from the other two levels of government it will total over \$6 billion in the coming five years. That

money will be spent on infrastructure that will make the difference between water that is fit to drink and water that is not.

We heard today from the member for Saint Boniface that \$2 billion of that \$6 billion will be spent in western Canada and that he has already received proposals for 600 projects that relate to water and sewage treatment in western Canada.

Second, we have made a commitment, in working with provinces and municipal governments, to create the country's first building code for municipal water and waste water facilities. The code will improve the ability of municipalities to meet high standards for water quality and ensure that Canadians from coast to coast have access to comparable facilities for producing potable water.

Third, we committed in the Speech from the Throne to making clean water one of our top three environmental priorities along with clean air and conservation. We also recognize that as trustee of one of the world's largest supplies of freshwater Canada has a particular responsibility to preserve that legacy for future generations, and we shall.

• (1525)

Fourth, in the Speech from the Throne we committed to developing stronger national guidelines for water quality by enhancing scientific research and continuing to work with provincial partners. As part of that we promised to strengthen the role of the National Water Research Institute whose world class work provides the basis for our action in sustaining freshwater ecosystems.

Fifth, we committed to investing in advanced information systems to make better use of our land and protect surface water and groundwater from the impact of industrial and agricultural activity. Such systems would help monitor what happens on the ground and measure the impact of agricultural and industrial activity on the underlying water supply.

With those five measures the government has demonstrated that it is doing its part to help provide safe, clean water for Canadians, a responsibility all governments in the federation must share.

There has been talk opposite about the need for a national standard. Since 1983 the Government of Canada has met twice a year with provincial officials, scientists, chemists and environmentalists. Together they have developed a consensus on the level of purity for Canadian drinking water.

That consensus is reflected in national guidelines that are reviewed twice a year. The guidelines are provided to the people on the ground who inspect water and provide, furnish, maintain and operate the equipment which purifies it. The guidelines apply to all public and private water sources across the country. While the approaches taken by provinces might vary, the guidelines reflect a Canada-wide consensus on water quality.

It is unfair and wrong to suggest we do not have national standards. The guidelines reflect those standards. The process by which the guidelines are developed reflects how the country is organized and who is responsible for what. We share part of the responsibility. We do not deny that. We accept it and meet it by working with partners every year, year in and year out, to make sure the guidelines are appropriate.

The Government of Canada has clear responsibility for drinking water on first nations lands. Since 1995 my colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, has invested over \$400 million in first nations communities throughout Canada to make sure facilities are in place to provide fresh water.

More generally, Health Canada maintains national surveillance for infectious diseases including those linked to contaminated water. In Walkerton, Health Canada scientists led the epidemiological investigation which identified the extent of the outbreak and the sequence of events leading up to it.

Last July, Health Canada consolidated the various components of our emergency response capacity into a single entity, the Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response. Through the centre Health Canada is positioned to respond more quickly and effectively in an emergency.

I mention these responsibilities because I want my colleagues in the House to know that we are actively doing our share, not just today or this week but continuously.

Members should be careful before they say the issue of safe drinking water can be resolved by the adoption in parliament of a federal statute or by the imposition of a federal law even if it contains penalties. The hard reality is that life is not that simple. The hard reality is that all of us must work together and do our share if we are to produce the results we want.

• (1530)

There is no doubt that we could go across the country and find areas where there is room for improvement, whether it be in grade schools, primary education or in hospital administration. No one would suggest for a moment that the solution is to have the Government of Canada pass a law to improve primary or grade school education and take over that field of endeavour. The solution, as in any successful federation, is for governments to work well together in good faith. That is what motivates Health Canada and the Government of Canada.

We must continue that work. I welcome the motion which I will vote in favour of. I undertake to the member for Fundy—Royal and to the House to raise the issue with my provincial counterparts the next time we meet in order to determine their willingness to work

Supply

toward establishing a safe water act. If they believe it would be helpful we shall be there to do our part.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the indication of the Minister of Health that members on the government side will be supporting the motion.

However I want to express concern about the minister's tentative and very modest support for the idea of national guidelines, standards, and legislation on the matter of clean and safe drinking water.

The minister talks about hard reality in terms of ensuring an adequate supply of safe drinking water. I want to say to him that the hard reality today is that people are dying from the failure of our water supply and the quality of our water in the country today. People are worried about contamination, sickness and problems associated with inadequate standards and legislation.

Would the minister concede that in a time of crisis when the public good and the public need are clearly at stake, it is necessary to have legislation, guidelines and standards that are enforceable and must be lived up to in order to ensure that the public good—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Allan Rock: Mr. Speaker, the member speaks of a national strategy. There is one. That strategy is found in the very elements I described today, namely working together with provincial and territorial governments, helping to finance from all levels of government the construction of appropriate facilities, and a continuous review of the guidelines. The member speaks about national standards. I suggest that those guidelines are national standards.

The member goes a step further and says to legislate them, have them in a federal statute. I assume she would say that if the statute is not complied with, the offender would face a criminal sanction. I assume she is referring to the criminal law power.

The member has failed to demonstrate whether the provinces are supportive of that approach or whether it would help. She makes a leap of logic by asserting in the House that which she does not know, namely that the problems in Battleford arose because we did not have federal legislation. A commission of inquiry has just been announced. It will look into the question of causality. I would be very much surprised if the problem were caused because of the lack of federal legislation. I suggest that we shall find it was something far more local and practical than that.

It is one thing to have federal legislation and another thing to follow through, to have the facilities in place, operate them, and maintain them to ensure that we produce the result we want. Everyone in the system has to do their part for it to work well.

Supply

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to applaud the Minister of Health for his support of the motion. The tenor of the debate was to try to have language that could be accepted by all members of the House regardless of partisan line. I understand the government's concern with respect to federal-provincial jurisdiction. That was how we shaped the question in our election platform last November.

The Liberal Party of Canada has always been a little trepidatious around this issue since the national energy program, which we all remember.

• (1535)

Now that the wording says "to begin the process of developing national standards on drinking water immediately", what is the first step the Minister of Health plans to initiate?

Hon. Allan Rock: Mr. Speaker, I have taken the first step. I spoke with the health ministers from Alberta and Nova Scotia this morning. I will continue those discussions and explore the possibilities of the approach the member described.

I would like to make something clear. I happen to be, by my political philosophy, very much in favour of the Government of Canada being an active government and fully asserting its constitutional authority in this federation. The country will not hold together or succeed unless it has a strong Government of Canada that does its full part.

However, I am not sure, in this particular field, that equates with federal legislation mandating standards with penal consequences if they are not obeyed. I do not know of a province in the country that does not accept and tries to put in place the guidelines that we have all agreed upon. I do not know of a municipality in the country that does not do its best. The answer is not as simple as that, and that is my point today.

Mr. Brian Pallister: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period, in response to a question I asked, a member opposite revealed a desire to understand more about the nature of a loan agreement between Industry Canada and a company in my province. I have obtained some documents and, with the consent of the House, would like to table them for the member and other members of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to table the documents?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are having an interesting debate this afternoon. In addition to the minister, I suspect there will be substantial support on this side of

the House for the motion. I certainly intend to support the principle of the motion.

However, some things need to be put on the record as a result of this kind of reaction where perhaps the NDP will use fearmongering by asking if we are going to wait until more people die. We also have a reversal by the official opposition, an opposition that was opposed to government interference and involvement in provincial jurisdictions and which is now changing its mind as a result of its constituency undergoing some pressure in the area of clean water.

We are seeing some rather substantial flip-flops in positions in party policy. Given the difficulty that the opposition is going through on that side of the House, I am surprised it can even spell the word policy these days.

What we are seeing here is a move that I would call constitutional reform by attrition. I will explain what I mean by that. Provincial governments across the land, most notably in Ontario, have been bailing out of areas that have for a long time been considered to be areas of provincial jurisdiction and responsibility. I will cite the example of Ontario. Premier Harris has succeeded in turning the entire relationship between governments upside down.

I served for almost 10 years as a municipal councillor. In those days, 1978 to 1987 and a bit, municipalities always went after the provinces to support them in certain areas, such as the provision of funds and transfer payments, because the municipalities were creatures of the province.

What the government of Ontario has done now is it has passed a law entitled the fewer municipal politicians act. All of a sudden it has managed to make municipal politicians look like the bad guys. Through amalgamations it has reduced the number of municipalities in Ontario from approximately 850 to 450. On the surface that seems like a good thing.

If we were to talk to people on the street I think they would say that if the overhead of carrying government bureaucracy was reduced and consolidated, that would be a good thing. In the city of Toronto, for example, if we were to amalgamate six fire departments into one I think the people would say that also sounds good. However the results can be summed up in the words cause and effect. For every action there is a reaction.

• (1540)

Provinces have been saying that they are not in the business of providing social housing. It should fall to the municipalities and they downloaded it.

All we have to do to experience firsthand the impact on infrastructure is to drive along Highway 401 in the greater Toronto area. People would think they would lose their vehicles at any

moment. The roads are deteriorating on a daily basis. Why? It is because the provincial government has decided to get out of that area. It has passed the entire cost of the public GO Transit in the southwestern sector of Ontario on to the municipal sector. How does that relate here?

I do not hear my friends from the Tory Party, who moved the motion, talking about the provincial Conservative government. Many people think they are more a reform style government. Did a cause and effect occur when the provincial Conservative government slashed the environment ministry, when staff was dramatically reduced in Ontario, when municipalities were told that it was now their responsibility to send their water out to private laboratories, in many cases 100 kilometres or 200 kilometres away, and wait for some technician in the facility to test the water and get back to them on whether or not there was an E. coli problem or any other kind of problem?

Somehow the Ontario provincial government seems to have washed its hands of responsibility. Walkerton happened in my personal opinion as a direct result of the provincial Conservative government deciding that less government was better, that a smaller ministry of the environment would be more efficient, that fewer staff to inspect would be beneficial. It could then send out \$200 tax rebate cheques to everybody in the province saying "Look at me, am I not wonderful?"

It is cause and effect. There is no question there was some personal culpability in the reports that came out, but one was dealing with people who were not trained properly on the job. Why were they not trained? It was because it was left up to a small rural municipality that did not have the sophistication or technology to deal with it and as a result people died. Now we see it spreading.

I personally believe it is a problem. One of the reasons I support the hon. member's motion is that it could be the tip of the iceberg. I agree that the federal government has to get involved. It must put in standards and ensure that provincial governments are not simply passing on tax cuts in the name of some form of fiscal responsibility while they put the safety of their residents in jeopardy.

This is an example of utmost irresponsibility. Members know full well that the ministry of the environment at the provincial level works with local municipalities to provide safe water. It has not been a responsibility of the federal government because we have had trust and faith under the terms of the constitution. Under the terms of our relationship we would never question something as basic and simple as clean water being put at jeopardy because of a political right wing agenda that simply wanted to find ways to get re-elected.

• (1545)

In reality that is a trend that has occurred. It may be somewhat different in North Battleford, but the result is a sense that someone else will take care of it, a malaise, a sense of complacency. It is most unfortunate.

Supply

We have heard members opposite say that the government should stop doing this or the government should stop doing that. As a result of cause and effect people are now saying that there is actually a role for government.

What is the number one responsibility of any government? I submit it is to provide good health, safety and quality of life. Everything else falls from that.

The jurisdictional battles will occur. The provinces want to do this and that. Who should regulate this or who should regulate that? The bottom line is that if collectively as governments we are unable to provide something as basic and fundamental as safe, clean water and safe sewage disposal in Canada in 2001, then shame on all of us at every level of government.

We must do it. Our government is committed to it. If it means entering into new agreements, whether it is through the infrastructure programs we have talked about or a new kind of national standard, that is what we will do. The government believes it is our responsibility to provide health, safety and a good quality of life for all Canadians.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the intention to support the Progressive Conservative motion. From the human health perspective it is time we had national drinking water standards so that we know the quality of the water we consume is of the same quality, whether in Saint-Jean, Quebec, St. John's, Newfoundland or Fort St. John, British Columbia.

A key word in the motion is the word immediately. Canadians demand action and leadership from the government. It is quicker for us to actually provide legislation for a poet laureate than to provide standards for drinking water. How fast does the health minister have to move to his satisfaction to address this very critical issue?

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to play games, but I am looking for the word immediately. Maybe the member has a different copy of the motion than I have. Regardless, the point is what the motion calls for is that we should act with the provinces and territories to establish—

Mr. John Herron: Immediately is in there.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: It does not say immediately. It states:

—to establish enforceable national drinking water standards—

When I see members of the Tory caucus and members of the Canadian Alliance caucus parading around on the nightly news in a joint fundraiser, trying to somehow come together to resolve their problems, what concerns me is the party that put this motion before the House is being sucked into the vortex of the extreme right wing of the Canadian Alliance. The Canadian Alliance was opposed to it. It was opposed to a committee. I suspect it will continue to be opposed to it in some form of trickery that it may use.

Supply

We think it should occur but it must occur with quality negotiations with our territories and our provinces. This member knows it. Any time the government tried to be heavy handed in dealing with the provinces, there were screams and howls of outrage from the opposition benches.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am interested to know from the member why two government bills going back to 1993 were allowed to die on the order paper. Specifically I mention Bill C-76 first read on December 11, 1996, and Bill C-14 first read on October 30, 1997.

• (1550)

Why were those bills allowed to die, given the fact that the government does and did have a majority?

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, I guess we could all ask each other questions like that. Why did members opposite not put a similar motion when Walkerton occurred? Were the deaths in Ontario somehow not of as great concern to members opposite?

Certainly there has been a responsibility with the provincial and the municipal governments to resolve these problems. We have had charges of interference. We have been told to stay out of the jurisdictions that belong to the provincial governments by members opposite, although not necessarily the NDP. The NDP would have us go after everything we could. We would have national standards for everything we could possibly conceive and probably eliminate provincial jurisdiction.

The other side of the extreme is these people say that the government should cut back, should slash, should burn, should reduce, should do nothing to provide good quality health, safety and quality of life for Canadians. We will not allow that to happen. We will make sure we provide those items.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after such a passionate flight of oratory, which seems right out of left field, I hope we will be able to come back to a much calmer, serene and enlightening debate.

We, in the Bloc Québécois, recognize at the outset that water quality in our communities is a very important issue. Recent events in Saskatchewan and also the problems we saw in Ontario a few months ago make the elected representatives of the people of Canada aware of the importance of providing their fellow citizens with a safe and clean water supply.

However, I do not like the way the Conservatives are trying to politicize this issue, and I will explain why. Only yesterday, the Conservatives were asking members on this side of the House,

mainly members of the Alliance and the Bloc Québécois, to join them in proposing a new form of decentralized federalism that would respect the jurisdictions of the provinces and the specificity of some of them. Today, on the day after their plea, they bring forward in this House a motion calling explicitly for Canada-wide national standards in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

Let me give my Conservative friends a warning “You cannot have your cake and eat it too. You cannot claim to be promoting a decentralized Canada and then want to implement Canada-wide standards in areas that do not come under federal jurisdiction”.

Quebecers will not be fooled. One cannot serve them this kind of double talk without having to live with the consequences at some point down the road. That was my introduction.

We have some problems with the motion in its current form. First, there is the fact that water is a provincial jurisdiction. The first problem is a matter of principle: water is not the responsibility of the federal government.

Moreover, our position is influenced by certain elements that have to do with current circumstances. For example, in the inaugural speech, the premier of Quebec, Bernard Landry, announced the imminent implementation of a national, meaning Quebec-wide, water management policy. It is a very laudable initiative, particularly since we know that Quebec is already known as the best province, in terms of the quality of its drinking water.

On June 19, 2000, the government of Quebec announced new draft regulations on the quality of drinking water. The draft regulations are being finalized and have been submitted to the Quebec cabinet. The final version should be released soon.

• (1555)

First, these new regulations would change quality standards according to Canadian recommendations as well as drinking water quality standards currently in place in the United States, which would result in proposed standards that would go beyond the Canadian recommendations.

Second, they would increase substantially the number of systems subject to mandatory controls.

Third, they would establish the minimum frequency for bacterial analysis.

Fourth, they would provide for a periodic review of the standards. Last, they would require operator qualification, which would be renewable every five years and which would take experience into account.

With these new standards, and we are not the only ones saying this, even the Sierra legal defence fund rated Quebec first among

the provinces, in terms of having the strictest drinking water standards in Canada. So, we have no need for more standards, at least in Quebec.

However there is a problem. Liberals have come up with an amendment to the motion that says “respecting their jurisdictions” or something like that. The government cannot have it both ways. It cannot have, on the one hand, national standards enshrined in legislation and, on the other hand, respect for provincial areas of jurisdiction, because it is, in fact, an area of provincial jurisdiction. It is a bit like appreciating open doors as long as they are closed. It is nonsense. Because of the Liberal amendment, there is a deep, inherent contradiction in this motion, which no longer makes any sense.

It is also interesting to see the federal government getting involved in this area, since the cuts it made in transfer payments to the provinces, among other things, have caused several problems. The provinces are stretched to the limit; they have just enough money to keep their heads above water, but then the municipalities have had to take the brunt of it. Although they were getting a lot of money from Quebec, they were hard hit by the federal cuts. The federal government has some gall to interfere when it is partly responsible for some of the problems a number of communities are having.

We also have to ask ourselves how a federal system would help improve things? For most people, the federal government is far away. The federal government’s habit of interfering in matters that are far removed from it reduces its efficiency, because those who are accountable for such things are much more remote in the federal government than they would be at the community or provincial level.

There is also the fact that, because things are not going too well in certain provinces, they use that to justify duplicating something that works well in other provinces. We are still talking about duplication and, as far as I am concerned, that is also a problem.

I will move an amendment to the amendment that the House would support I believe. The Bloc Québécois could vote in favour of the motion thus amended.

I move :

That the amendment be amended by adding between the words “jurisdiction” and “to ensure” the following: “, while allowing for full opting-out by any province,”

If this amendment to the amendment were agreed to, the Bloc Québécois would support the motion. We could be unanimous in the House in saying that provinces willing to abide by Canada-wide standards could do so. Also, those who would not want to, who want to protect their turf, their jurisdiction, would be free to do it.

• (1600)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The amendment to the amendment is in order.

Supply

[English]

Mr. John Herron: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In order to introduce another amendment in this regard, I think you would have to seek unanimous consent to put the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In this case it is a subamendment and not another amendment. Therefore, it is permissible under the rules and procedures.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments that I would like make.

I have a lot of respect for the hon. member and in the approach he has taken in the House. He also knows that the tradition of the Progressive Conservative Party is to be very respectful of jurisdictional concerns between the federal government and the provinces. We would support an opting out provision, if a province had a piece of legislation that was equal or higher.

I would like to speak to the history of this issue. In 1990 the then minister of the environment had concerns about three legislative gaps that were not in existence in Canada. They were our capacity to protect species at risk, the need to renew our pesticide legislation and the need to have a safe drinking water act. The then minister was the hon. Lucien Bouchard. Mr. Bouchard was right then, and that piece of legislation is right now in this regard.

This is a shared jurisdiction. However does the member understand that the jurisdictional component, as it applies to the federal government, is the Department of Health when we legislate toxicity with pesticides, chemicals or exposure therein?

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Marceau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the member from the Conservative Party, for his question. He is someone with whom I get along well and agree to disagree.

In answer to his preamble, I will say this. He stated that throughout history the Conservatives have always been very respectful of jurisdictional boundaries. First, it is my opinion that the motion says the reverse. Second, during the first election campaign I ran in, in 1997, the Conservative platform under the leadership of Jean Charest explicitly mentioned national standards for education, which is very clearly an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

Furthermore, with all due respect, I must disagree with the member when he says that this is a shared jurisdiction. Water as such is local in nature. Under section 92 of the Constitution, I want to pull out, but in the meantime we might as well abide by it, everything listed there is a provincial responsibility.

The member’s premise is completely wrong. This is an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. Again I question the need for the federal government to stick its nose into this.

Supply

• (1605)

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for his speech on this important issue. I remind the House that not only does the Quebec government believe it would be wrong to set national standards on drinking water, but also this is what was reported yesterday regarding Sylvain Laramée of the Réseau environnement du Québec, and I quote:

Earlier in the day, the head of the Réseau environnement, Sylvain Laramée, said publicly that he wished that Ottawa would not intervene for reasons that were not partisan, but technical, adding that Quebec and the provinces in general were better equipped to deal with drinking water problems in co-operation with the municipal governments, taking into account the geographical context.

I believe we are on the verge of reaching a consensus in Quebec on this issue. Is it not true that what our Conservative colleague is saying shows how little is known about the way things are in Quebec in this particular area?

Mr. Richard Marceau: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie that the Conservative member's motion shows a misunderstanding of Quebec's specificity, but that is not all. It also shows a lack of common sense.

We must ensure that those responsible for something are as close as possible to the people they serve. The closer, the better. In Europe, this principle is called subsidiarity.

Here, we should ensure that those responsible for a program are as close as possible to the people so that, if people have something to say, they have access to that person and are able to hold him or her accountable.

Mr. Ghislain Fournier (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if I rise in the House today, it is first and foremost to support the amendment to the amendment moved by my colleague from Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, whom I want to congratulate and thank for his excellent work.

The amendment to the amendment moved by my colleague totally changes the motion of our Conservative colleagues. I truly believe that, once again, the federal government is trying to gain public support in an area that is not its responsibility. However that is nothing new from the federal government since it does that in several areas, such as parental leave and education, to name just two.

Is there, under the Canadian constitution, an area that is more clearly under provincial jurisdiction than education? Yet, the federal government insists on interfering in that area.

When I hear this government say that it wants to establish national standards, I find it absolutely scandalous. I have here a Transport Canada document, an inventory of contaminated sites. It says that a single department has contaminated 41 sites in Quebec.

So if we take one department of the Government of Canada and we multiply that by 10 provinces, it means that about 400 sites would have been contaminated by that department throughout the country, unless it only contaminated sites in Quebec because it likes us so much.

In my riding alone, there are about five sites that are totally contaminated and for three years now the Bloc Québécois and the member for Manicouagan have been urging the federal government to assume its responsibilities, that is to apply the polluter pays rule.

How can we trust a government that continues to pollute, that does not assume its responsibilities and that is trying to preach to the provinces by saying: "We will set national standards"? Before lecturing anyone, I think the federal government should assume its responsibilities.

• (1610)

This is why the amendment to the amendment put forward by my colleague from the Bloc Québécois is very important. I am confident that all the members in this House will support this amendment to the amendment, which will make it possible for us to vote in favour of the motion.

I would say that the motion before the House is a legitimate one because what could be more legitimate than to want to provide the public with drinking water. As usual, the government has decided to infringe upon areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. The federal government is trying to demonstrate to Canadians that the provinces cannot handle it without its help, when we know that it was the federal government that created this problem in the first place by cutting, as it did, transfer payments to provinces and funding that would have helped provinces to provide these services to the public.

Now the federal government is getting ready to spend money in provincial areas of jurisdiction because, as we say in Quebec, it has the cash to do it. It cut the funding to the provinces in order to better control them afterwards.

Well, Quebec has news for the federal government. Water management is an area of provincial jurisdiction and the Bloc Québécois is opposed to any federal involvement in this area.

Some may say that the Bloc sounds like a broken record, but this is the root cause of the problem we have in this country. The federal government is always trying to interfere in provincial jurisdictions.

As far as the issue at hand is concerned, it is clear, since we are talking about water, we could say as clear as spring water, that water quality and availability come under provincial jurisdiction.

Why would the federal government want to get involved? The problems in provinces like Ontario and Saskatchewan do not

justify duplicating a system that is working just fine. We have seen the standards established by Quebec and Ontario, and, as my colleague indicated this afternoon, Quebec ranked first.

Quebec emphasizes prevention more. The standards on byproducts of water disinfection are stricter in Quebec than in any other province. Parasite removal requirements are also more stringent. With the standards in the new draft regulations about to be passed by the Quebec government, its water quality standards will be the highest in any province. Why would the federal government want to interfere in a situation that is so clear?

The Bloc Québécois objects categorically to federal involvement and maintains that the only thing the federal government should do in that area is to correct the problems of its own making, when it has contaminated the water table and thus deprived people of safe drinking water.

This, as members will have guessed, is part of the numerous representations I have made, with the support of the Bloc Québécois, to have the government solve the problem of the beaches area in Sept-Îles. Time and again, we have heard the government say “We did everything that had to be done to correct the situation”. Today, we are once again asking for a real solution.

On June 19, 2000, the Quebec department of the environment announced new draft regulations on the quality of drinking water. These regulations are being reviewed by the provincial cabinet and, as I mentioned earlier, are about to be adopted. Instead of trying to copy what was done in Quebec, the federal government must do all it can to correct the situations for which it is responsible.

Since Quebec ranks first, emphasizes prevention more and has stricter standards for water disinfection byproducts, as I said, the Bloc Québécois supports the initiatives of the Quebec government and objects to the federal government interfering in this area in such an unacceptable fashion.

• (1615)

It has to correct the situations it itself caused. I mentioned these at the beginning of my speech. They include the pollution of the beaches at Sept-Îles and even at Havre-Saint-Pierre, in my riding, where the airport site was affected.

If the federal government wants to look after drinking water the way it is looking after decontaminating the beaches water, that will be just great. We have been asking the federal government to decontaminate the beaches for three years. There are other sites we are demanding they decontaminate as well. Now it tell us it is going to adopt national standards. Just because certain provinces have problems does not mean that the federal government has to charge in where it has no business. Once again, it is interfering and duplicating provincial responsibilities.

Supply

Since my time is running out, I hope that, once again, members of the House will support the amendment to the amendment of the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier and that we will all finally be able to vote in favour of a motion which will improve the public's drinking water.

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we heard the member for Manicouagan say that he supports the amendment to the amendment proposed by his party because it totally changes the motion before us.

There is a problem there because, in principle, an amendment to an amendment should only change the amendment and not the entire motion. However let us not dwell on that. He said it changed everything. Well, I think he said something that calls for comment at this time.

The basic proposal before us, not everybody has been following the debate since this morning, is that the federal government should join with the provinces in establishing national standards. We brought forward an amendment, which was agreed upon with the Progressive Conservative Party, to ensure that provincial jurisdictions are respected.

So far, so good. All the parties who spoke seemed to support the idea of working together to establish national standards if provincial jurisdictions were to be respected. Then an amendment on the amendment was put forward, saying that any province that so desired could opt out.

A province that so desires, that could be a province that has not met the standards of it could be one that has met or exceeded federal standards could opt out. This means that members of the Bloc Québécois are simply saying no to national standards because they want to allow any province that so desires to not to endorse such standards.

My question to the member for Manicouagan is this: Does he realize that the wording of his amendment to an amendment leaves the door wide open for a province that would not have met the federal standards to opt out?

Mr. Ghislain Fournier: Mr. Speaker, when I said that this changes everything, I just wanted to say that this unequivocally clarifies the amendment put forward by my hon. colleague for Anjou—Rivière-de-Prairies.

The Liberal government and the members opposite, who claim to be people concerned with clarity in issues related to acts and regulations, find some clarity in the amendment to the amendment put forward by the Bloc Québécois. It is clear that we know where we are going.

As for the question asked by my hon. colleague, the answer is no. I think we have to trust provincial governments. As for the Quebec government, I fully trust it. Besides, if my hon. colleague has read

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the regulations on the environment and drinking water that will soon be adopted in Quebec, he will see that the federal government has nothing to teach the Quebec government in this regard.

• (1620)

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all remember the consultations held by the Bureau des audiences publiques sur l'environnement or BAPE. Paul Begin had then invited all Quebecers to put in their two cents worth on water.

I would like to quote a comment made during the hearings:

As to the quality of the water in Quebec, it is "generally good"; it is in the southwest, in the farmlands of the St. Lawrence Lowlands that the quality is at its lowest level. The St. Lawrence River, which supplies water 45% of the Quebec population, is still suffering contaminated, particularly downstream from Montreal.

As to water quality, which is an important issue, and I am still quoting:

From 1989 to 1995, more than 800 people were affected by 24 epidemics related to the drinking of surface water. These figures could represent a mere fraction of the actual numbers, because several cases were never reported.

With regard to the Lower St. Lawrence and water quality, can the member, who comes from a remote area, tell the House if it is possible that nobody has been affected by water problems in Quebec in the last few years?

Mr. Ghislain Fournier: Mr. Speaker, first, my colleague referred to the BAPE. I would tell him that indeed the BAPE recommended that Quebec develop its own policy on drinking water and environment.

I would also remind him that in my riding, there is no contamination attributable to Quebec, to the government of Quebec. None whatsoever.

There is contamination in Sept-Îles and in my area, for example in the beaches area, where 1,000 people are without water, but this contamination is due to the government that my colleague is a member of.

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In the heat of political debate in the House, especially during oral question period, we sometimes get carried away. I have to admit that it happened to me today, when the member for Chambly was putting a question to the public works minister.

I hummed a song that was inappropriate in the House of Commons. I would like to apologize to anyone I might have hurt, especially to the public works minister.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Your message is clear and your apology is accepted.

[English]

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik.

This particular debate is an excellent occasion that illustrates the kind of conflict and ideology that political parties get into from time to time, because what we have, Mr. Speaker, is a motion calling on the government to act essentially in an area of provincial jurisdiction. I think we would all agree in this House, on all sides of the House, that the right to clean water is something that should be shared by all Canadians. All Canadians should be entitled to obtain clean water, to use clean water anywhere in the land. It is fundamental in the same sense that every Canadian should expect the same standard of justice, the same standard of safety and the same standard of health care. The government over the years has provided in those areas.

But in fact, when it comes to the safety of water, this has been something that has been mostly under provincial jurisdiction. We are now faced with the problem where we have had several tragic incidents where the water supply in communities has been dangerously polluted and it has led to some deaths. Quite rightly, in my view, we have a motion before us calling on the government to be in the forefront of establishing enforceable standards of water quality.

• (1625)

Here is the rub. Three of the opposition parties who have been stressing the need for enforceable national standards for water quality today, those three parties, when you press them, are not willing to have those standards imposed upon the provinces because those three parties, part of their ideological structure is that they believe that fundamental political life should begin with the lowest common denominator, normally the provinces, certainly in the case of the Bloc Québécois, but also in the case of the Canadian Alliance and the Conservatives with the municipalities.

In Ontario, and I cannot speak for all of the nation on this issue, but in Ontario I can remember when the average citizen could test his water for free. Mr. Speaker, you would take it from a tap, take it to your local medical officer of health who would have given you a proper container, and that water would be tested. Indeed for many, many years in Ontario the province was responsible for ensuring that municipalities had their water tested properly.

But in 1996 the current Conservative government in Ontario basically downloaded the obligation of water quality on the municipalities, on the one hand, who had to look after maintaining such standards as there were, and the province basically privatized

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the testing of water and took away the free program of water testing through municipalities that up until 1996 led to I think 400,000 tests per annum in Ontario of water quality. All that disappeared.

The problem with this motion and particularly with the amendment to the motion, particularly the amendment that is indeed supported by our side, is if you cop on national standards to protect citizens, then you have to have a way of guaranteeing that those national standards are acted upon.

In response to a question I posed earlier in this debate, the leader of the Conservative opposition said well, yes, we can have enforceable standards, but he believes that we can come to agreements with the provinces.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you, what if you cannot come to an agreement with a province? What if a province decides it does not want to spend the money on water quality? What if you have a case, as you have in Ontario, when the province downloads the responsibility of water quality to the municipality?

We talked for a little bit about infrastructure. This is not just a question of drinking water. This is a question of the proper treatment of sewage and that kind of thing. What we have in my own municipality, we have a situation where the province downloaded the responsibility for sewage treatment and that kind of thing to the municipality and it has privatized it.

In Hamilton a private corporation runs the sewage treatment plant and there is a lot of anecdotal evidence indicating that that sewage treatment plant is in a lot of trouble. The problem is because the province downloaded to the municipality who privatized it. No one knows whether that sewage treatment plant is functioning properly.

I submit that all across Ontario and indeed all across the country that no one knows for sure that the water treatment plants in communities like North Battleford or communities like Collingwood or other communities across the country, that they indeed are looking after their water quality to a standard that guarantees the safety of the people using it.

The other thing that is overlooked in this debate is we have talked only about municipal water supplies. I do not think I have heard a single person mention the tens of thousands of Canadians who get their water from wells. Again, Mr. Speaker, in Ontario it used to be possible to test water in your well. As a farmer or a cottage person, you could take it to the local officer of health and you could have that water tested. That no longer exists.

Now that we have the industrial farm where there is an increased risk of truly deadly bacteria getting into the water table, we do not have free water treatment even though two decades ago or 15 years ago we did have. So we are regressing, not progressing. My difficulty with this motion is not the original motion. It is the amendment to the motion that says that we must respect jurisdictions.

• (1630)

We are afraid in the House to stand up as members of parliament and say that when it is a case of national safety, when it is the safety of Canadians, whether it is a criminal code, a justice, a law or a medical issue, we are afraid to stand up in this House and say that we should have national standards for water quality across this country, and we have to impose them upon the provinces if they are not willing to do it.

I do not think that is going to happen. Today I heard the Prime Minister say in the House that we had to respect provincial jurisdictions. It is going to be very difficult to turn that around considering what we have heard from the opposition. I note that only the NDP was prepared to suggest that the water quality standards that were being proposed should be mandatorily enforced.

If we are not going to intrude on provincial jurisdictions, then I suggest this national government has to do something, and it has to do something practical. Quite frankly, this is a feel good motion and does not do a darn thing. It just makes it look as though we MPs on both sides of the House are taking action when in fact I do not believe real action is being taken.

Therefore, I would like to suggest something to my own government. The government should invest in free testing for all communities and individuals across the country. If we cannot enter into provincial jurisdiction to fix the water treatment plants, then at least give Canadians, whether they are on a farm or in a municipality, an opportunity to test their water to see whether it is safe. If they find the water is unsafe, then they can go to their local politicians, be they municipal or provincial, and demand action. However right now it is a complete darkness, a complete void. People are drinking water and have no idea whether it is safe, and of course they are unwilling to test it themselves and often cannot afford to.

My suggestion, my contribution to this debate is that as far as the motion is concerned I am not at all happy with it. I just do not think it goes anywhere. However I am delighted to at least have had the opportunity to offer what I think is a constructive suggestion to the government, and that is to institute a nationwide free water testing program.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the member. For the most part his remarks were certainly on target.

I understand his reservation with the federal government trying to enforce their wishes on the provinces. If I heard the member correctly, I believe he was referring to leadership at the federal level where sometimes the federal government has to exercise its power to force the provinces to do something.

Supply

Is the member suggesting that maybe the government or the Prime Minister should do that or are we not acting simply because we do not want to get into a tug of war or head-butting with the provinces?

I just want a little clarification on that. From time to time the federal government has to spend some of its political capital doing things which may prove to be unpopular in the short term, but obviously the right thing to do in the long term.

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what I am proposing. I think the federal government should meet with the provinces and set the standards. Once the standards are set, then they should be enforceable, and the federal government should ensure that they are mandatory and enforced.

The difficulty is that in any province there may be a change of government that has a mantra of tax cuts, for example. This is precisely what happened in Ontario. Because of the desire to cut personal income taxes, spending on the environment, water quality and all these things was slashed overwhelmingly.

I believe that we have to give the provinces the opportunity to work in their jurisdictions. Where we go wrong is when we allow the provinces or the municipalities to take actions that actually affect the safety of Canadians.

I would say that yes the government should do what is unpopular. However the reality is, the opposite side and the member who spoke for his party have suggested that the federal government should not intrude into provincial jurisdiction in this matter if there is reluctance on the part of provinces. I say it should, although I do not hold much hope that that is what is going to happen.

• (1635)

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned in his speech, which I was delighted to hear, the reference to the millions of Canadians, including myself, that had their own wells.

When we talked about rural water supplies, some of these communities are rural and have a central water supply supplied by the village which is still considered by definition rural. There are millions of Canadians who depend on their own well water. It is a much bigger problem which goes to the care and the concern for the environment. Some deed that we might do might contaminate our neighbour's well water.

Maybe the member could talk about the responsibility of individual Canadians in ensuring that our water in those rural areas is kept safe.

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, in my region the local municipality is allowing developers to group houses together, drill their own wells and maintain their own water supply in their neighbourhoods. There is no scrutiny on this at all. They are required to meet

an original or basic standard, but then it is up to that small neighbourhood or community to maintain that water quality and keep testing it.

That is no good. Whether it is one of these small neighbourhoods or individual farms scattered across the country, this is really the enormous problem. Unless we come up with a program whereby the federal government actually requires or provides the funds for free water testing, we are always going to have this danger.

This debate has only been about communities. It has not been about the millions of Canadians who get their water from private sources. This is where the government could act and should act.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver East, Health; the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest, National Defence.

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part in this debate on water quality. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency both play a crucial role in ensuring that Canadians have a safe and clean drinking water supply.

Protecting water against agricultural runoff is a challenge that our government is taking very seriously. Most of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's initiatives in this area focus on prevention, that is on ways to prevent problems from arising.

However, as many Canadians know, municipalities and provinces are mainly responsible for providing drinking water to Canadian families.

Local governments must first find suitable water sources to meet present and future needs of the community without endangering the environment. Then they must treat the water to eliminate any trace of impurities or contaminants. Finally, municipalities must build and maintain a system to supply water to the consumers.

The last stage, and not the least, consists in building treatment and evacuation systems to make sure that wastewaters do not harm the environment. In short, it is a complex process in which the margin of error is very small.

While water supply systems are being developed and are in service, municipalities and provinces often need scientific data on the farming and agrifood sector. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has undertaken a research project on nutrients in fertilizers and manure, to reduce the risk of water contamination by these nutrients.

This task is not easy as Canada is a huge country with many different ecosystems. Moreover, every community has specific needs and challenges.

Another example of scientific data supplied by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is the development of a series of agricultural and environmental indicators, several of which are linked to water quality.

These indicators, which track environmental trends over the years in various regions of Canada, make it possible to identify areas and resources still at risk. Moreover, they serve as a starting point to focus action on areas where risks are the highest.

• (1640)

For example, when provinces and municipalities are considering using some lands for agricultural purposes, the indicators and background data help scientists determine if farming might involve the risk of nutrients or other substances contaminating water. The indicators help in developing measures to evaluate and reduce as much as possible the risk of water contamination due to farming.

As everybody knows, the semi-arid prairies present unique problems with regard to water supply. Ensuring supply in these areas is often a bit more difficult.

However, I am proud to mention that the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration supports the main part of the research and technology transfer the Prairie communities need to manage their water supply. The administration is currently conducting numerous projects relating to water supply, conservation and protection of water resources and improvement of water quality.

For instance, the rural water development program provides technological support for projects to develop wells and improve water quality. The administration also works together with its rural clients and local producer groups to promote better practices to protect surface water and ground water.

In the area of research, scientists with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada are looking into other means of protecting drinking water against contaminants. Numerous Canadians are now aware of the dangers associated with bacteria like *E. coli*.

As part of the fight against *E. coli* and other pathogenic agents, researchers at the Lethbridge research centre have discovered and tested several promising solutions which could help to check and eliminate those organisms at all points in the food chain, from the farm to the consumer. The Canadian beef industry, our partner in research, plays a major role by financing this initiative in the hope of finding a solution.

I am pleased to inform hon. members that producers are playing an active role in the protection of the environment. Many of them

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took the trouble to prepare and implement an environmental plan for their operations. For some time now, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has been providing them with financial assistance to do so.

In co-operation with Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, farmers have developed many other initiatives, so that Canadians may enjoy a cleaner environment and cleaner drinking water. Those initiatives are financed through the Canadian adaptation and rural development fund and implemented with the help of the provinces.

The environmental stewardship initiative in agriculture, which is part of the Canadian adaptation and rural development fund, will make \$10 million available to farmers over the next three years to help them launch projects dealing with water quality improvement, soil decontamination, wildlife habitat and biodiversity conservation in agricultural areas and the use of farming practices that will help prevent climate change.

Another activity funded by the Canadian adaptation and rural development fund is the environmental stewardship initiative in livestock production. It has a \$1.3 million budget for research and technology transfer to assist producers in adopting environmentally friendly practices. This initiative will also help to create an environmental certification system for the hog industry.

These are some of the measures taken by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to help protect Canada's water supply.

Members will have to agree that we have accomplished a lot with the provinces and the producers, our partners. However, we will continue to do more and to work relentlessly because we take our responsibilities seriously. Canadian farmers and the public expect no less from us.

[*English*]

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to talk about another aspect of water protection that Canadians may find of interest. To be quite square, this was in the Progressive Conservative platform in the election this past November. The issue originated from work done by the provincial Progressive Conservative government and the minister of environment, Kim Jardine. She made a very progressive approach to water stewardship for which she should be commended, and I think the nation should do that.

• (1645)

Would the hon. member subscribe to what we are advocating, that new guidelines be drawn up in a co-operative fashion by provincial, territorial and federal governments that determine which activities can take place next to municipal wells, water sources, lakes or whatnot? The most profound example might be to

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prohibit gas stations or laundromats from opening within a protected perimeter around municipal wells. Would the hon. member support such an initiative?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy St-Julien: Mr. Speaker, before answering the question put by the hon. member, I would like to review what has been happening, especially in the last two years.

The waterborne diseases we saw in Ontario last year and in Saskatchewan recently have brought to our attention the issue of access to safe drinking water in Canada. We know that these two tragedies are not isolated incidents. Several people have died and thousands got sick. I share the grief of all the people and the families who were affected by this. This situation is becoming all too common in Canada. As parliamentarians, it is not easy for us to find out that some people have died from drinking contaminated water.

There is something else that must be taken into consideration. If we talk about wells, we know that, in Quebec, many lakes are near some municipalities. For several years now, only one lake has been constantly monitored by the Quebec Department of the Environment, only one lake out of more than 500,000. Who is looking after the other lakes in Quebec?

The same thing goes for wells. The federal government is not monitoring all the wells in all the provinces. It is not easy, especially in remote areas. We have the same problem with ground water. In Quebec, 20% of the people living outside urban areas, as well as hundreds of businesses and farm operations, use ground water as their water source. However we know almost nothing about where they are located. That is what is happening right now in Quebec. We do not know how renewable these water reserves are and we know nothing about their users. Only the municipalities that use that water source or water bottlers are accountable for their water management.

In answer to the member's question, I am not familiar with the report he is referring to. He would have to provide me with a copy. However, we know that there is a considerable lack of knowledge in the provinces, in Quebec for instance, on the state of their water supply.

[*English*]

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour today to speak to the motion. I compliment the Progressive Conservative Party and its leader for raising this very pressing issue.

If there is one thing of critical importance to all human beings it is the quality of our water. Access to potable safe water has been a given in society for a very long time. Canadians over the years have come to expect and perhaps take for granted that a country with a population of 32-odd million, which possesses some 11% of the

world's reservoir of freshwater, would have safe drinking water. As we have seen, however, circumstances in Saskatchewan and in Walkerton have shown something very different.

I will quote a senator from the other place who said very poignantly that lack of access to safe water has become a clear and present danger to society.

How have we come to ignore that which is the essence of life on our planet? A document put out in 1987 set very clear guidelines for water quality in our country. The document said there could and must be co-operation between the federal and provincial governments in developing national standards to allow every person in Canada access to safe and potable water. Have we seen any action since 1987? No, we have not.

• (1650)

The government has been in power since 1993. Surely it has had an opportunity to address the issue, bring forth national standards and give Canadians confidence in the water that comes out of their taps. We have not seen that. It is now 2001 and we are sitting here trying to shake up the government to work with the provinces and develop national standards so that our drinking water is safe for everyone from coast to coast.

How bad is it? Recent reports estimate that 357 of 645 Ontario drinking water systems fail to meet even provincial standards. Twenty-five per cent of Newfoundland's water systems have serious problems, to such an extent that boiling water and relying on bottled water has become the norm. Let us imagine a province where 25% of the drinking water is unfit for human consumption. It is completely absurd.

Canadian drinking water guidelines set out safe recommended limits for various polluting substances in raw, untreated drinking water, recreational water and water used for industrial or agricultural purposes. The guidelines are designed to protect and enhance the quality of water in Canada.

However the guidelines apply only to inland surface water and groundwater and not to estuary and marine water. There are large holes in the system. Those holes need to be plugged and they needed to be plugged yesterday. Failure to do so will result in more deaths such as we have seen in Walkerton and Saskatchewan.

Unfortunately this is only the tip of the iceberg. It is only by the grace of God that it has not happened more often. It quite surprises me that we have not seen more outbreaks of water borne diseases in Canada.

The guidelines limit the concentration of pollutants according to their potential health effects or aesthetic appearance. However are they reasonable? Has anyone questioned whether the guidelines are safe? Should the limits be higher or lower? We do not know.

Even if the guidelines are violated and water is high in coliform, pesticides or other substances, what is the penalty? Nothing. There

is no penalty because there is no mechanism to enforce the guidelines. We desperately need enforceable guidelines. What is the point of guidelines without a mechanism to enforce them?

This is not an academic issue, as we have heard today. The issue is fundamental to the health and welfare of Canadians. As a physician I know that some water borne diseases do not affect healthy adults but they certainly affect the most vulnerable in society. Water borne diseases selectively take out the most vulnerable such as children and the elderly. They are the ones who pay the price in an outbreak.

Canadian drinking water guidelines are used by provincial, territorial and federal agencies to assess water quality problems and manage competing users of water resources. However the guidelines are not law.

The government's response to this has been to put a bit of money forward. That is easy to do. It is easy to stand and devote money, but there must be a plan. We know the municipalities and provinces are responsible for this. However there must be a co-ordinated effort by all parties.

In our country, whether in regard to water quality, health care or other issues, we have fractured jurisdictions and often the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. The ministers have a great opportunity. They can bring together their provincial and municipal counterparts and develop a co-ordinated system of enforceable guidelines, based on science and fact, that will protect our society.

• (1655)

This is an issue of the future. Make no mistake about it. The lives of millions of Canadians will rest on it.

Over the last 10 to 15 years we have seen disturbing things in the ecosystem. There has been a massive die-off of amphibians not only in our country but around the world.

The scientific evidence of late points to a direct correlation between the die-off of amphibians and the use of pesticides. In addition to the die-off there are massive and grotesque deformities. There are frogs with eyes on the top of their heads, amphibians with multiple legs or two heads, and fishes with gross deformities. These are very serious problems.

The reason this is a bellwether, the proverbial canary in the mine, is that the skin or outer covering of amphibians is very permeable. It is not like our skin which is tougher. The skin of amphibians is permeable and absorbs substances much easier. This makes them the canary in the mine. Amphibians tend to visibly manifest the cancer causing, teratogenic and mutagenic capabilities of the substances they absorb.

We ignore that to our detriment. Epidemiological studies have shown clear health risks in communities that are close to areas

Supply

with high concentrations of pesticides. Pesticides, fungicides and fertilizers are necessary but they must be used in an appropriate way. We are now seeing grave health risks in some communities near the areas where they are used.

Higher rates of birth deformities, teratogenicity, neonatal morbidity and mortality are all being observed. They are red flags waving in front of us but we are not responding. That is very serious.

A number of substances are being released into our environment that will be here not for a few days but for years or hundreds or even thousands of years. Large amounts of nucleotides or radioactive material from Russia are being bioaccumulated within our ecosystems in the north.

As a result, Inuit people and many large aquatic and terrestrial mammals have large amounts of radioactive, cancer causing and teratogenic substances within them. We see higher rates of cancer, birth deformities and neonatal morbidity and mortality in the north than in other communities. Science clearly indicates that individuals in the north are suffering because they eat mammals that bioaccumulate these dangerous substances in their bodies.

That is what is happening. We and others have warned the government for some six years about this but have seen no action. The government knows about this. It is very aware. Perhaps it feels impotent to deal with it, but it is not. The only way to deal with these issues is to work with the international community. We must deal seriously with the release of these substances into our environment. On the issue of fertilizers, we have seen changes in the pH levels of our water quality and acidification of the water as a direct result of pesticides being leached into it. As a result, a number of water tables have been polluted. If we measure the outflow of water into larger basins, we see that the concentrations are very high.

• (1700)

We know our farmers need good fertilizer and pesticides to give us the food we require. We have to allow them to work by using these fertilizers, fungicides and pesticides in a reasonable way. However we do not see enough studies nor action on the side of the government.

In fact, the environment commissioner has repeatedly mentioned to the government the ways in which it is falling flat on its face with respect to being the guardian of our environment. The environment commissioner, like the auditor general did with finance, has waved the flag many times. He has given specific solutions on what the government could do, and has a moral responsibility to engage in, to improve our environment. It is there in black and white.

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The environment commissioner's reports have come out in black and white. They are good reports, fair reports and are constructive. We can only hope that the government will push hard and listen to what has been said in these reports and to the other signs, so it can build an environment that will be fairer and cleaner.

An issue that is very important on the west coast of British Columbia, because a large number of people rely on salmon, is what is happening to our salmon stocks, which have been decimated. We believe part of the reason for this decimation is the conditions and changes taking place with respect to the water. The water temperature is going up. As a result, there has been change in the mackerel population which is eating the salmon fry and the fingerlings. That is in part contributing to the very small numbers which are returning. It is decimating the fish populations, particularly the salmon populations, on the west coast.

Do we know why this is happening? No. We certainly have some theories that it is related to global warming. In fact the oceans are now believed to be a CO₂ sink that is taking up a lot of the unrecognized carbon dioxide being released.

It is incumbent upon the government, and indeed the Minister of the Environment, to work with his provincial and municipal counterparts across the country, rather than have a balkanized system of environmental standards which benefits absolutely no one, to develop safe water for all Canadians.

Potable water is essential. It is our life blood. I can only encourage the government and say to it that we as a party together with the Progressive Conservatives and others will push hard to make sure that the government lives up to its responsibility to ensure that all Canadians will have access to potable water, such as the type we are all drinking.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I just want to take time to pose a question to my colleague.

In my other life I was the mayor of a town in southern Alberta of 1,700 people. The quality of the water and the concern about supplying safe water was always paramount in our minds. We had to go through different scenarios with different standards being presented. The standards would change and we would have to increase our ability to treat our water.

In subsequent years there was a problem. The mayor at the time, the council, the staff and others worked very hard to correct it. I still live in that town of 1,700, and it is spending over \$1 million in upgrading the water treatment plant to meet standards for supplying safe, secure water for the community. That is just one community that is spending well over \$1 million to upgrade its facility.

The idea of standards that are binding is one thing. We support the motion brought forward today by the Conservatives to have something put in place to deal with that.

• (1705)

I would like to ask my colleague a question about the science needed to test the systems which are in place and the funds required to come up with a water study in Canada which would absolutely place, in some parameters, the condition of our present drinking water systems in Canada. What emphasis does he think should be placed on the science, as well as the standards needed to supply that safe water?

Mr. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, it is a pertinent question. Whatever we do, the guidelines we put forth have to be based on good science. Science would give us the basis upon which we could have guidelines that were reasonable, that were safe in terms of health care aspects and guidelines that were doable. Sometimes we set standards that are not attainable. We need to have attainable standards that are safe for the public and that are imminently doable, and we can do it.

A lot of the science has already been done. One very interesting thing is that a number of new water achievement capabilities have been discovered around the world. We need to extract the best information from around the world, and on a case by case basis utilize water purification mechanisms appropriate for given communities.

In my area of Victoria sewage is dumped out after only primary treatment. To my knowledge, that is not much of a problem because of where the water is and the velocity of the tides. I am sure that it would give comfort to people in Victoria to have a secondary water treatment system where we could remove a number of other substances that are bioaccumulating in our environment, the likes and consequences of which we do not know at this point in time. The bottom line is base the guidelines on good science.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of an issue that could come before the House where Canadians would have a greater sense of resolve, purpose and be of a common mind, than the issue of clean drinking water in our country.

The debate today has been very interesting. I thank the member for Fundy—Royal and the Progressive Conservatives for bringing the issue forward. It is important that we have this debate.

I listened very carefully to my hon. colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca. It seems to me there is an agreement that we all want to see clean water, but the issue before us is whether or not the federal government is willing to take a stand and show the leadership to provide enforceable national drinking water stan-

Supply

dards, and to do that now, not at some point in the future. I heard my colleague say that he supports that.

On a related matter, it seems to me that he also raised the question of the use of pesticides and how they can contaminate our water systems. He gave some very alarming examples of what can happen. We have to remember that in the environment committee a very excellent report was issued on the use of pesticides, particularly for cosmetic use. My understanding is that the Canadian Alliance issued a dissenting report. It did not agree with the main report.

We have to be very clear about the positions being put forward. Either we agree that there should be clean water for Canadians, and that it should be backed up by enforceable national standards, or we think that somehow various jurisdictions such as the marketplace would take over. I believe the former.

What is the position of his party on the use of pesticides? Would it agree that it is a central point in whether or not we have a clean water system? Would he agree that we need to have strong enforceable standards, not just for the water but for all of the stuff that goes into those water systems, like pesticides?

• (1710)

Mr. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has asked a very important question. It is important to remember that the government is using a federal water policy from 1987, which is obsolete. We have to deal with this issue now.

We are in support of the motion put forward by the member for Fundy—Royal and his party to develop enforceable guidelines based on science.

With respect to pesticides, there are pesticides and there are pesticides. For us to have access to safe food stuffs and enough food to eat, there is little doubt that pesticides are required. However it is important that we use pesticides wisely and whatever pesticide is utilized, it is used on the basis of science not on the basis of emotion.

I would encourage the House to continue to look at whether we need to use pesticides for cosmetic reasons. If so, what kind do we need to use? I would encourage the NDP member to work with the rest of us, as I know she will, to develop those kind of standards, which we would support.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak in support of this motion. I know that other members of the NDP caucus have spoken in strong support of this motion from the Progressive Conservative Party. We consider this to be a very critical issue facing Canadians.

The confidence of Canadians has been very severely shaken given recent events in both Walkerton and now in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. This raises the question as to whether or not any

Canadian can rely upon our water system. It is something that many Canadians over the years have taken for granted.

We live in a country of immense natural resources with a huge abundance of freshwater. Canadians believe that our water resources are protected, clean and safe for drinking. Yet the events that have unfolded in the last year have seriously undermined what it is that we believe in in terms of clean water.

This leads me to the question of the motion before the House. While there needs to be negotiation and collaboration between the federal jurisdictions, provinces and territories, the critical issue is to arrive at a place where we have enforceable national drinking water standards that are enshrined in a safe water act. If we cannot agree on that in the House, then why are we here?

We are talking about a basic necessity of life. We are talking about the provision of a resource for human consumption that should be safeguarded at all cost. I do not think it makes a difference whether one lives in a small or rural community where reliance is on well water or whether one lives in a large urban centre where reliance is on very complex water filtration and chlorination systems. No matter where people live, they should have the assurance that the water is safe.

In my community in Vancouver there have been significant issues about water quality through the greater Vancouver regional district. We have fought many battles to try and stop logging in the watersheds where the reservoirs are to ensure the quality of that water. This has been a very hotly contested local issue. Many activists have taken it on over the years.

If we had a safe water act and enforceable standards along with a federal government that was willing to put that into law and provide a guarantee to every Canadian, then it seems to me that we would not have the severity of the problems that we are facing in Canada today. Along with my colleagues I wholeheartedly support the motion, as I hope every member of the House does, that we act in the public interest to uphold the public interest in terms of the provision of clear and safe drinking water.

• (1715)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5.15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply. The question is on the amendment to the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment to the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment to the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

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The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1745)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

*(Division No. 85)***YEAS****Members**

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Asselin | Bachand (Saint-Jean) |
| Bellehumeur | Bigras |
| Bourgeois | Brien |
| Cardin | Crête |
| Desrochers | Dubé |
| Duceppe | Fournier |
| Gagnon (Champlain) | Gagnon (Québec) |
| Girard-Bujold | Guay |
| Laframboise | Lebel |
| Loubier | Marceau |
| Ménard | Paquette |
| Perron | Plamondon |
| Rocheleau | Roy |
| Sauvageau | St-Hilaire |
| Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay) | Venne—30 |

NAYS**Members**

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| Abbott | Adams |
| Alcock | Allard |
| Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands) | Anderson (Victoria) |
| Assad | Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska) |
| Bailey | Bakopanos |
| Barnes | Beaumier |
| Bélaïr | Bélangier |
| Bellemare | Bennett |
| Benoit | Bertrand |
| Binet | Blaikie |
| Blondin-Andrew | Bonin |
| Bonwick | Borotsik |
| Boudria | Bradshaw |
| Breitkreuz | Brisson |
| Brown | Bryden |
| Burton | Byrne |
| Caccia | Cadman |
| Calder | Cannis |
| Caplan | Carignan |
| Casson | Castonguay |
| Catterall | Chamberlain |
| Charbonneau | Chatters |
| Chrétien | Clark |
| Coderre | Collenette |
| Comartin | Comuzzi |
| Copps | Cotler |
| Cullen | Cummins |
| Cuzner | Davies |
| Day | Desjarlais |
| DeVillers | Dhaliwal |
| Doyle | Dromisky |
| Drouin | Duhamel |
| Duplain | Eggleton |
| Elley | Epp |
| Eyking | Farrah |

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| Finlay | Fontana |
| Forseth | Fry |
| Gagliano | Gallant |
| Galloway | Godfrey |
| Godin | Goldring |
| Goodale | Gouk |
| Graham | Gray (Windsor West) |
| Grey (Edmonton North) | Grose |
| Guarnieri | Harris |
| Harvard | Harvey |
| Hearn | Herron |
| Hill (Macleod) | Hill (Prince George—Peace River) |
| Hilstrom | Hubbard |
| Ianno | Jackson |
| Jaffer | Jennings |
| Johnston | Jordan |
| Kenney (Calgary Southeast) | Keyes |
| Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast) | Knutson |
| Kraft Sloan | Laliberte |
| Lastewka | Lavigne |
| Lee | Leung |
| Lill | Lincoln |
| Longfield | Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands) |
| MacAulay | MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough) |
| Macklin | Mahoney |
| Malhi | Maloney |
| Manning | Marcil |
| Mark | Marleau |
| Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca) | Martin (Winnipeg Centre) |
| Matthews | Mayfield |
| McCallum | McCormick |
| McGuire | McKay (Scarborough East) |
| McLellan | McNally |
| McTeague | Meredith |
| Merrifield | Mills (Red Deer) |
| Mills (Toronto—Danforth) | Mitchell |
| Moore | Murphy |
| Myers | Nault |
| Neville | Normand |
| Nyström | O'Brien (London—Fanshawe) |
| O'Reilly | Obhrai |
| Owen | Pagtakhan |
| Pallister | Pankiw |
| Paradis | Parrish |
| Peric | Peschisolido |
| Phinney | Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex) |
| Pillitteri | Proctor |
| Proulx | Provenzano |
| Rajotte | Redman |
| Reed (Halton) | Regan |
| Reid (Lanark—Carleton) | Richardson |
| Ritz | Robillard |
| Robinson | Rock |
| Saada | Savoy |
| Scherrer | Schmidt |
| Scott | Serré |
| Sgro | Shepherd |
| Skelton | Sorenson |
| Speller | Spencer |
| St. Denis | St-Jacques |
| St-Julien | Steckle |
| Stewart | Stinson |
| Strahl | Szabo |
| Thibault (West Nova) | Thibeault (Saint-Lambert) |
| Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest) | Thompson (Wild Rose) |
| Tirabassi | Tobin |
| Toews | Tonks |
| Torsney | Ur |
| Valeri | Vanclief |
| Vellacott | Volpe |
| Wasylcyia-Leis | Wayne |
| Whelan | Wilfert |
| Williams | Wood |
| Yelich—217 | |

PAIRED MEMBERS

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|-------------------|--|
| Augustine | Bergeron |
| Bulte | Carroll |
| Cauchon | Dalphond-Guiral |
| Dion | Gauthier |
| Guimond | Harb |
| Lalonde | Lancôt |
| Minna | Patry |
| Picard (Drummond) | Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis) |

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment lost.

[English]

The next question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think if you seek it you would find unanimous consent that those who voted on the amendment to the amendment be recorded as voting on the amendment now before the House with Liberal members voting yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members will be voting yea to the motion.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois will vote against this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP vote no on this motion.

[English]

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative vote yes to the motion.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to say that I will be voting with the Canadian Alliance caucus on the motion.

(The House divided on the amendment, which was agreed to on the following division:)

Supply

(Division No. 86)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Abbott | Adams |
| Alcock | Allard |
| Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands) | Anderson (Victoria) |
| Assad | Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska) |
| Bailey | Bakopanos |
| Barnes | Beaumier |
| Bélair | Bélanger |
| Bellemare | Bennett |
| Benoit | Bertrand |
| Binet | Blondin-Andrew |
| Bonin | Bonwick |
| Borotsik | Boudria |
| Bradshaw | Breitkreuz |
| Brisson | Brown |
| Bryden | Burton |
| Byrne | Caccia |
| Cadman | Calder |
| Cannis | Caplan |
| Carignan | Casson |
| Castonguay | Catterall |
| Chamberlain | Charbonneau |
| Chatters | Chrétien |
| Clark | Coderre |
| Collenette | Comuzzi |
| Copps | Cotler |
| Cullen | Cummins |
| Cuzner | Day |
| DeVillers | Dhaliwal |
| Doyle | Dromisky |
| Drouin | Duhamel |
| Duplain | Eggleton |
| Elley | Epp |
| Eyking | Farrah |
| Finlay | Fontana |
| Forseath | Fry |
| Gagliano | Gallant |
| Galloway | Godfrey |
| Goldring | Goodale |
| Gouk | Graham |
| Gray (Windsor West) | Grey (Edmonton North) |
| Grose | Guarnieri |
| Harris | Harvard |
| Harvey | Hearn |
| Herron | Hill (MacLeod) |
| Hill (Prince George—Peace River) | Hilstrom |
| Hubbard | Ianno |
| Jackson | Jaffer |
| Jennings | Johnston |
| Jordan | Kenney (Calgary Southeast) |
| Keyes | Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast) |
| Knutson | Kraft Sloan |
| Laliberte | Lastewka |
| Lavigne | Lee |
| Leung | Lincoln |
| Longfield | Lunn (Saamich—Gulf Islands) |
| MacAulay | MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough) |
| MacKlin | Mahoney |
| Malhi | Maloney |
| Manning | Marcil |
| Mark | Marleau |
| Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca) | Matthews |
| Mayfield | McCallum |
| McCormick | McGuire |
| McKay (Scarborough East) | McLellan |
| McNally | McTeague |
| Meredith | Merrifield |
| Mills (Red Deer) | Mills (Toronto—Danforth) |
| Mitchell | Moore |
| Murphy | Myers |
| Nault | Neville |
| Normand | O'Brien (London—Fanshawe) |
| O'Reilly | Obhrai |
| Owen | Pagtakhan |
| Pallister | Pankiw |
| Paradis | Parrish |
| Peric | Peschisolido |

Supply

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Phinney | Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex) |
| Pillitteri | Proulx |
| Provenzano | Rajotte |
| Redman | Reed (Halton) |
| Regan | Reid (Lanark—Carleton) |
| Richardson | Ritz |
| Robillard | Rock |
| Saada | Savoy |
| Scherrer | Schmidt |
| Scott | Serré |
| Sgro | Shepherd |
| Skelton | Solberg |
| Sorenson | Speller |
| Spencer | St. Denis |
| St-Jacques | St-Julien |
| Steckle | Stewart |
| Stinson | Strahl |
| Szabo | Thibault (West Nova) |
| Thibeault (Saint-Lambert) | Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest) |
| Thompson (Wild Rose) | Tirabassi |
| Tobin | Toews |
| Tonks | Torsney |
| Ur | Valeri |
| Vanclief | Vellacott |
| Volpe | Wayne |
| Whelan | Wilfert |
| Williams | Wood |
| Yelich—207 | |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Asselin | Bachand (Saint-Jean) |
| Bellehumeur | Bigras |
| Blaikie | Bourgeois |
| Brien | Cardin |
| Comartin | Crête |
| Davies | Desjarlais |
| Desrochers | Dubé |
| Duceppe | Fournier |
| Gagnon (Champlain) | Gagnon (Québec) |
| Girard-Bujold | Godin |
| Guay | Laframboise |
| Lebel | Lill |
| Loubier | Marceau |
| Martin (Winnipeg Centre) | Ménard |
| Nystrom | Paquette |
| Perron | Plamondon |
| Proctor | Robinson |
| Rocheleau | Roy |
| Sauvageau | St-Hilaire |
| Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay) | Venne |
| Wasylycia-Leis—41 | |

PAIRED MEMBERS

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Augustine | Bergeron |
| Bulte | Carroll |
| Cauchon | Dalphond-Guiral |
| Dion | Gauthier |
| Guimond | Harb |
| Lalonde | Lancôt |
| Minna | Patry |
| Picard (Drummond) | Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis) |

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment carried.

• (1750)

The next question is on the main motion as amended. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion as amended?

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I think you would find consent in the House that those who voted on the previous

amendment be recorded as voting on the motion now before the House, with Liberal members voting yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House give its consent to proceed accordingly?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members will be voting yes to the motion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois oppose this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP present are voting yes to the motion.

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party will be voting yes to the motion.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 87*)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Abbott | Adams |
| Alcock | Allard |
| Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands) | Anderson (Victoria) |
| Assad | Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska) |
| Bailey | Bakopanos |
| Barnes | Beaumier |
| Belair | Belanger |
| Bellemare | Bennett |
| Benoit | Bertrand |
| Binet | Blaikie |
| Blondin-Andrew | Bonin |
| Bonwick | Borotsik |
| Boudria | Bradshaw |
| Breitkreuz | Brisson |
| Brown | Bryden |
| Burton | Byrne |
| Caccia | Cadman |
| Calder | Cannis |
| Caplan | Carignan |
| Casson | Castonguay |
| Catterall | Chamberlain |
| Charbonneau | Chatters |
| Chrétien | Clark |
| Coderre | Collenette |
| Comartin | Comuzzi |
| Copps | Cotler |
| Cullen | Cummins |
| Cuzner | Davies |
| Day | Desjarlais |
| DeVillers | Dhaliwal |
| Doyle | Dromisky |
| Drouin | Duhamel |
| Duplain | Eggleton |
| Elley | Epp |
| Eyking | Farrah |
| Finlay | Fontana |
| Forseth | Fry |
| Gagliano | Gallant |
| Galloway | Godfrey |
| Godin | Goldring |
| Goodale | Gouk |
| Graham | Gray (Windsor West) |

Grey (Edmonton North)
 Guarnieri
 Harvard
 Hearn
 Hill (Macleod)
 Hilstrom
 Ianno
 Jaffer
 Johnston
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
 Kraft Sloan
 Lastewka
 Lee
 Lill
 Longfield
 MacAulay
 Macklin
 Malhi
 Manning
 Mark
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Matthews
 McCallum
 McGuire
 McLellan
 McTeague
 Merrifield
 Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
 Moore
 Myers
 Neville
 Nystrom
 O'Reilly
 Owen
 Pallister
 Paradis
 Peric
 Phinney
 Pillitteri
 Proulx
 Rajotte
 Reed (Halton)
 Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
 Ritz
 Robinson
 Saada
 Scherrer
 Scott
 Sgro
 Skelton
 Sorenson
 Spencer
 St-Jacques
 Steckle
 Stinson
 Szabo
 Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Tobin
 Tonks
 Ur
 Vanclief
 Volpe
 Wayne
 Willfert
 Wood

Grose
 Harris
 Harvey
 Herron
 Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
 Hubbard
 Jackson
 Jennings
 Jordan
 Keyes
 Knutson
 Laliberte
 Lavigne
 Leung
 Lincoln
 Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
 Mahoney
 Maloney
 Marcil
 Marleau
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Mayfield
 McCormick
 McKay (Scarborough East)
 McNally
 Meredith
 Mills (Red Deer)
 Mitchell
 Murphy
 Nault
 Normand
 O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
 Obhrai
 Pagtakhan
 Pankiw
 Parrish
 Peschisolido
 Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
 Proctor
 Provenzano
 Redman
 Regan
 Richardson
 Robillard
 Rock
 Savoy
 Schmidt
 Serré
 Shepherd
 Solberg
 Speller
 St. Denis
 St-Julien
 Stewart
 Strahl
 Thibault (West Nova)
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
 Tirabassi
 Toews
 Torsney
 Valeri
 Vellacott
 Wasylcyia-Leis
 Whelan
 Williams
 Yelich—218

Gagnon (Champlain)
 Girard-Bujold
 Laframboise
 Loubier
 Ménard
 Perron
 Rocheleau
 Sauvageau
 Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)

Gagnon (Québec)
 Guay
 Lebel
 Marceau
 Paquette
 Plamondon
 Roy
 St-Hilaire
 Venne—30

Government Orders

PAIRED MEMBERS

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Augustine | Bergeron |
| Bulte | Carroll |
| Cauchon | Dalphon-D-Guiral |
| Dion | Gauthier |
| Guimond | Harb |
| Lalonde | Lanctôt |
| Minna | Patry |
| Picard (Drummond) | Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis) |

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the main motion, as amended, carried.

* * *

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS ACT

The House resumed from May 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, an act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, be read the third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-18.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find consent that members who voted on the previous motion, with the exception of the member for Calgary Centre, be recorded as voting on the motion now before the House, with Liberal members voting yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House give its consent to proceed accordingly?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members will be voting no to the motion.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois are in favour of this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP vote no on this motion.

NAYS

Members

| | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| Asselin | Bachand (Saint-Jean) |
| Bellehumeur | Bigras |
| Bourgeois | Brien |
| Cardin | Crête |
| Desrochers | Dubé |
| Duceppe | Fournier |

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the whip's help from the Liberal Party. However, the Progressive Conservative members will be voting yes with the exception of the right hon. member for Calgary Centre who had to catch an airplane.

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 88)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Adams | Alcock |
| Allard | Anderson (Victoria) |
| Assad | Asselin |
| Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska) | Bachand (Saint-Jean) |
| Bakopanos | Barnes |
| Beaumier | Bélair |
| Bélanger | Bellehumeur |
| Bellemare | Bennett |
| Bertrand | Bigras |
| Binet | Blondin-Andrew |
| Bonin | Bonwick |
| Borotsik | Boudria |
| Bourgeois | Bradshaw |
| Brien | Brisson |
| Brown | Bryden |
| Byrne | Caccia |
| Calder | Cannis |
| Caplan | Cardin |
| Carignan | Castonguay |
| Catterall | Chamberlain |
| Charbonneau | Chrétien |
| Coderre | Collenette |
| Comuzzi | Copps |
| Cotler | Crête |
| Cullen | Cuzner |
| Desrochers | DeVillers |
| Dhaliwal | Doyle |
| Dromisky | Drouin |
| Dubé | Duceppe |
| Duhamel | Duplain |
| Eggleton | Eyking |
| Farrah | Finlay |
| Fontana | Fournier |
| Fry | Gagliano |
| Gagnon (Champlain) | Gagnon (Québec) |
| Galloway | Girard-Bujold |
| Godfrey | Goodale |
| Graham | Gray (Windsor West) |
| Grose | Guarnieri |
| Guay | Harvard |
| Harvey | Hearn |
| Herron | Hubbard |
| Ianno | Jackson |
| Jennings | Jordan |
| Keys | Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast) |
| Knutson | Kraft Sloan |
| Laframboise | Laliberte |
| Lastewka | Lavigne |
| Lebel | Lee |
| Leung | Lincoln |
| Longfield | Loubier |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| MacAulay | MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough) |
| Macklin | Mahoney |
| Malhi | Maloney |
| Marceau | Marcil |
| Marleau | Matthews |
| McCallum | McCormick |
| McGuire | McKay (Scarborough East) |
| McLellan | McTeague |
| Ménard | Mills (Toronto—Danforth) |
| Mitchell | Murphy |
| Myers | Nault |
| Neville | Normand |
| O'Brien (London—Fanshawe) | O'Reilly |
| Owen | Pagtakhan |
| Paquette | Paradis |
| Parrish | Peric |
| Perron | Phinney |
| Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex) | Pillitteri |
| Plamondon | Proulx |
| Provenzano | Redman |
| Reed (Halton) | Regan |
| Richardson | Robillard |
| Rocheleau | Rock |
| Roy | Saada |
| Sauvageau | Savoy |
| Scherrer | Scott |
| Serré | Sgro |
| Shepherd | Speller |
| St. Denis | St-Hilaire |
| St-Jacques | St-Julien |
| Steckle | Stewart |
| Szabo | Thibault (West Nova) |
| Thibeault (Saint-Lambert) | Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest) |
| Tirabassi | Tobin |
| Tonks | Torsney |
| Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay) | Ur |
| Valeri | Vanclief |
| Venne | Volpe |
| Wayne | Whelan |
| Wilfert | Wood—182 |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Abbott | Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands) |
| Bailey | Benoit |
| Blaikie | Breitkreuz |
| Burton | Cadman |
| Casson | Chatters |
| Comartin | Cummins |
| Davies | Day |
| Desjarlais | Elley |
| Epp | Forseth |
| Gallant | Godin |
| Goldring | Gouk |
| Grey (Edmonton North) | Harris |
| Hill (Macleod) | Hill (Prince George—Peace River) |
| Hilstrom | Jaffer |
| Johnston | Kenney (Calgary Southeast) |
| Lill | Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands) |
| Manning | Mark |
| Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca) | Martin (Winnipeg Centre) |
| Mayfield | McNally |
| Meredith | Merrifield |
| Mills (Red Deer) | Moore |
| Nystrom | Obhrai |
| Pallister | Pankiw |
| Peschisolido | Proctor |
| Rajotte | Reid (Lanark—Carleton) |
| Ritz | Robinson |
| Schmidt | Skelton |
| Solberg | Sorenson |
| Spencer | Stinson |
| Strahl | Thompson (Wild Rose) |
| Toews | Vellacott |
| Wasylcia-Leis | Williams |
| Yelich—65 | |

Government Orders

PAIRED MEMBERS

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Augustine | Bergeron |
| Bulte | Carroll |
| Cauchon | Dalphond-Guiral |
| Dion | Gauthier |
| Guimond | Harb |
| Lalonde | Lancôt |
| Minna | Patry |
| Picard (Drummond) | Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis) |

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY WATERS TREATY ACT

The House resumed from May 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, an act to amend the International Boundary Waters Treaty Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division of the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-6. The question is on the motion.

[Translation]

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, you will find that there is unanimous consent that members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House, with Liberal members voting yes.

• (1755)

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members will be voting yes to the motion.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois will vote against this motion.

[English]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP will be voting no to the motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party vote yes on this motion.

[English]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 89)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Abbott | Adams |
| Alcock | Allard |
| Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands) | Anderson (Victoria) |
| Assad | Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska) |
| Bailey | Bakopanos |
| Barnes | Beaumier |
| Bélair | Bélanger |
| Bellemare | Bennett |
| Benoit | Bertrand |
| Binet | Blondin-Andrew |
| Bonin | Bonwick |
| Borotsik | Boudria |
| Bradshaw | Breitkreuz |
| Brisson | Brown |
| Bryden | Burton |
| Byrne | Caccia |
| Cadman | Calder |
| Cannis | Caplan |
| Carignan | Casson |
| Castonguay | Catterall |
| Chamberlain | Charbonneau |
| Chatters | Chrétien |
| Coderre | Collenette |
| Comuzzi | Copps |
| Cotler | Cullen |
| Cummins | Cuzner |
| Day | DeVillers |
| Dhaliwal | Doyle |
| Dromisky | Drouin |
| Duhamel | Duplain |
| Eggleton | Elley |
| Epp | Eyking |
| Farrah | Finlay |
| Fontana | Forseth |
| Fry | Gagliano |
| Gallant | Galloway |
| Godfrey | Goldring |
| Goodale | Gouk |
| Graham | Gray (Windsor West) |
| Grey (Edmonton North) | Grose |
| Guarnieri | Harris |
| Harvard | Harvey |
| Hearn | Herron |
| Hill (Macleod) | Hill (Prince George—Peace River) |
| Hilstrom | Hubbard |
| Ianno | Jackson |
| Jaffer | Jennings |
| Johnston | Jordan |
| Kennedy (Calgary Southeast) | Keyes |
| Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast) | Knutson |
| Kraft Sloan | Laliberte |
| Lastewka | Lavigne |
| Lee | Leung |
| Lincoln | Longfield |
| Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands) | MacAulay |
| MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough) | Macklin |
| Mahoney | Malhi |
| Maloney | Manning |
| Marcil | Mark |
| Marleau | Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca) |
| Matthews | Mayfield |
| McCallum | McCormick |
| McGuire | McKay (Scarborough East) |
| McLellan | McNally |
| McTeague | |

Government Orders

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Meredith | Merrifield |
| Mills (Red Deer) | Mills (Toronto—Danforth) |
| Mitchell | Moore |
| Murphy | Myers |
| Nault | Neville |
| Normand | O'Brien (London—Fanshawe) |
| O'Reilly | Obhrai |
| Owen | Pagtakhan |
| Pallister | Pankiw |
| Paradis | Parrish |
| Peric | Peschisolido |
| Phinney | Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex) |
| Pillitteri | Proulx |
| Provenzano | Rajotte |
| Redman | Reed (Halton) |
| Regan | Reid (Lanark—Carleton) |
| Richardson | Ritz |
| Robillard | Rock |
| Saada | Savoy |
| Scherrer | Schmidt |
| Scott | Serré |
| Sgro | Shepherd |
| Skelton | Solberg |
| Sorenson | Speller |
| Spencer | St. Denis |
| St-Jacques | St-Julien |
| Steckle | Stewart |
| Stinson | Strahl |
| Szabo | Thibault (West Nova) |
| Thibeault (Saint-Lambert) | Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest) |
| Thompson (Wild Rose) | Tirabassi |
| Tobin | Toews |
| Tonks | Torsney |
| Ur | Valeri |
| Vanclief | Vellacott |
| Volpe | Wayne |
| Whelan | Wilfert |
| Williams | Wood |
| Yelich—206 | |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Asselin | Bachand (Saint-Jean) |
| Bellehumeur | Bigras |
| Blaikie | Bourgeois |
| Brien | Cardin |
| Comartin | Crête |
| Davies | Desjarlais |
| Desrochers | Dubé |
| Duceppe | Fournier |
| Gagnon (Champlain) | Gagnon (Québec) |
| Girard-Bujold | Godin |
| Guay | Laframboise |
| Lebel | Lill |
| Loubier | Marceau |
| Martin (Winnipeg Centre) | Ménard |
| Nystrom | Paquette |
| Perron | Plamondon |
| Proctor | Robinson |
| Rocheleau | Roy |
| Sauvageau | St-Hilaire |
| Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay) | Venne |
| Wasylcia-Leis—41 | |

PAIRED MEMBERS

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Augustine | Bergeron |
| Bulte | Carroll |
| Cauchon | Dalphond-Guiral |
| Dion | Gauthier |
| Guimond | Harb |
| Lalonde | Lancôt |
| Minna | Patry |
| Picard (Drummond) | Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis) |

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

MARINE LIABILITY ACT

The House resumed from May 4 consideration of Bill S-2, an act respecting marine liability, and to validate certain by-laws and regulations, as reported (without amendment) from the committee and of Motion No. 1.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on report stage of Bill S-2. The question is on Motion No. 1. A negative vote on Motion No. 1 requires the question to be put on Motion No. 2.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I think you would find consent that members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as voting on the motion now before the House, with Liberal members voting no.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House agree to proceed accordingly?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Alliance members will be voting yes to the motion. The member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast will be voting with the Canadian Alliance caucus on the motion.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois vote yes on this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, members of the New Democratic Party vote yes on this motion.

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party vote yes to this motion.

[English]

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 90)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Abbott | Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands) |
| Asselin | Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska) |
| Bachand (Saint-Jean) | Bailey |
| Bellehumeur | Benoit |
| Bigras | Blaikie |
| Borotsik | Bourgeois |
| Breitkreuz | Brien |
| Brison | Burton |
| Cadman | Cardin |

Government Orders

Casson
Comartin
Cummins
Day
Desrochers
Dubé
Elley
Forseth
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gallant
Godin
Gouk
Guay
Hearn
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Johnston
Laframboise
Lill
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Manning
Mark
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McNally
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Nystrom
Pallister
Paquette
Peschisolido
Proctor
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Ritz
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Skelton
Sorenson
St-Hilaire
Strahl
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Venne
Wayne
Yelich —105

Chatters
Crête
Davies
Desjarlais
Doyle
Duceppe
Epp
Fournier
Gagnon (Québec)
Girard-Bujold
Goldring
Grey (Edmonton North)
Harris
Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Jaffer
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lebel
Loubier
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Marceau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayfield
Ménard
Merrifield
Moore
Obhrai
Pankiw
Perron
Plamondon
Rajotte
Reynolds
Robinson
Roy
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Stinson
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Toews
Vellacott
Wasylcia-Leis
Williams

Jennings
Keyes
Knutson
Laliberte
Lavigne
Leung
Longfield
Macklin
Malhi
Marcil
Matthews
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mitchell
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen
Paradis
Peric
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Proulx
Redman
Regan
Robillard
Saada
Scherrer
Serré
Shepherd
St. Denis
St-Julien
Stewart
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Whelan
Wood—143

Jordan
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
Lee
Lincoln
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Marleau
McCallum
McGuire
McLellan
Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Murphy
Nault
Normand
O'Reilly
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Phinney
Pillitteri
Provenzano
Reed (Halton)
Richardson
Rock
Savoy
Scott
Sgro
Speller
St-Jacques
Steckle
Szabo
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tobin
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Wilfert

NAYS

Members

Adams
Allard
Assad
Barnes
Bélair
Bellemare
Bertrand
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Bradshaw
Bryden
Caccia
Cannis
Carignan
Catterall
Charbonneau
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cotler
Cuzner
Dhaliwal
Drouin
Duplain
Eyking
Finlay
Fry
Gallaway
Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)
Guarnieri
Harvey
Ianno

Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélangier
Bennett
Binet
Bonin
Boudria
Brown
Byrne
Calder
Caplan
Castonguay
Chamberlain
Chrétien
Collenette
Copps
Cullen
DeVillers
Dromisky
Duhamel
Eggleton
Farrah
Fontana
Gagliano
Godfrey
Graham
Grose
Harvard
Hubbard
Jackson

PAIRED MEMBERS

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Augustine | Bergeron |
| Bulte | Carroll |
| Cauchon | Dalphon-D-Guiral |
| Dion | Gauthier |
| Guimond | Harb |
| Lalonde | Lancôt |
| Minna | Patry |
| Picard (Drummond) | Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis) |

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 lost.

The next question is on Motion No. 2.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I think you would find consent that the vote just taken on the previous motion be applied to the motion now before the House.

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members will be voting yes as in the last motion.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois vote yes on this motion.

[English]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP will be voting yes to the motion.

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party will be voting yes to the motion.

Government Orders

(The House divided on Motion No. 2, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 91)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Abbott | Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands) |
| Asselin | Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska) |
| Bachand (Saint-Jean) | Bailey |
| Bellehumeur | Benoit |
| Bigras | Blaikie |
| Borotsik | Bourgeois |
| Breitkreuz | Brien |
| Brison | Burton |
| Cadman | Cardin |
| Casson | Chatters |
| Comartin | Crête |
| Cummins | Davies |
| Day | Desjarlais |
| Desrochers | Doyle |
| Dubé | Duceppe |
| Elley | Epp |
| Forseth | Fournier |
| Gagnon (Champlain) | Gagnon (Québec) |
| Gallant | Girard-Bujold |
| Godin | Goldring |
| Gouk | Grey (Edmonton North) |
| Guay | Harris |
| Hearn | Herron |
| Hill (Macleod) | Hill (Prince George—Peace River) |
| Hilstrom | Jaffer |
| Johnston | Kenney (Calgary Southeast) |
| Laframboise | Lebel |
| Lill | Loubier |
| Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands) | MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough) |
| Manning | Marceau |
| Mark | Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca) |
| Martin (Winnipeg Centre) | Mayfield |
| McNally | Ménard |
| Meredith | Merrifield |
| Mills (Red Deer) | Moore |
| Nystrom | Obhrai |
| Pallister | Pankiw |
| Paquette | Perron |
| Peschisolido | Plamondon |
| Proctor | Rajotte |
| Reid (Lanark—Carleton) | Reynolds |
| Ritz | Robinson |
| Rocheleau | Roy |
| Sauvageau | Schmidt |
| Skelton | Solberg |
| Sorenson | Spencer |
| St-Hilaire | Stinson |
| Strahl | Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest) |
| Thompson (Wild Rose) | Toews |
| Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay) | Vellacott |
| Venne | Wasylcia-Leis |
| Wayne | Williams |
| Yelich —105 | |

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Bonwick | Boudria |
| Bradshaw | Brown |
| Bryden | Byrne |
| Caccia | Calder |
| Cannis | Caplan |
| Carignan | Castonguay |
| Catterall | Chamberlain |
| Charbonneau | Chrétien |
| Coderre | Collenette |
| Comuzzi | Copps |
| Cotler | Cullen |
| Cuzner | DeVillers |
| Dhaliwal | Dromisky |
| Drouin | Duhamel |
| Duplain | Eggleton |
| Eyking | Farrah |
| Finlay | Fontana |
| Fry | Gagliano |
| Galloway | Godfrey |
| Goodale | Graham |
| Gray (Windsor West) | Grose |
| Guarnieri | Harvard |
| Harvey | Hubbard |
| Ianno | Jackson |
| Jennings | Jordan |
| Keyes | Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast) |
| Knutson | Kraft Sloan |
| Laliberte | Lastewka |
| Lavigne | Lee |
| Leung | Lincoln |
| Longfield | MacAulay |
| Macklin | Mahoney |
| Malhi | Maloney |
| Marcil | Marleau |
| Matthews | McCallum |
| McCormick | McGuire |
| McKay (Scarborough East) | McLellan |
| McTeague | Mills (Toronto—Danforth) |
| Mitchell | Murphy |
| Myers | Nault |
| Neville | Normand |
| O'Brien (London—Fanshawe) | O'Reilly |
| Owen | Pagtakhan |
| Paradis | Parrish |
| Peric | Phinney |
| Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex) | Pillitteri |
| Proulx | Provenzano |
| Redman | Reed (Halton) |
| Regan | Richardson |
| Robillard | Rock |
| Saada | Savoy |
| Scherrer | Scott |
| Serré | Sgro |
| Shepherd | Speller |
| St. Denis | St-Jacques |
| St-Julien | Steckle |
| Stewart | Szabo |
| Thibault (West Nova) | Thibeault (Saint-Lambert) |
| Tirabassi | Tobin |
| Tonks | Torsney |
| Ur | Valeri |
| Vanclief | Volpe |
| Whelan | Wilfert |
| Wood—143 | |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Adams | Alcock |
| Allard | Anderson (Victoria) |
| Assad | Bakopanos |
| Barnes | Beaumier |
| Bélair | Bélangier |
| Bellemare | Bennett |
| Bertrand | Binet |
| Blondin-Andrew | Bonin |

PAIRED MEMBERS

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Augustine | Bergeron |
| Bulte | Carroll |
| Cauchon | Dalphon-D-Guiral |
| Dion | Gauthier |
| Guimond | Harb |
| Lalonde | Lancôt |
| Minna | Patry |
| Picard (Drummond) | Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis) |

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 2 lost.

Hon. David Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I think you would find consent that members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as voting on the motion now before the House, with Liberal members voting yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House give its consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1800)

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members vote yes to the motion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois vote yes on this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, members of the New Democratic Party vote no on this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party vote yes to the motion.

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 92*)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Abbott | Adams |
| Alcock | Allard |
| Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands) | Anderson (Victoria) |
| Assad | Asselin |
| Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska) | Bachand (Saint-Jean) |
| Bailey | Bakopanos |
| Barnes | Beaumier |
| Bélair | Bélangier |
| Bellehumeur | Bellemare |
| Bennett | Benoit |
| Bertrand | Bigras |
| Binet | Blondin-Andrew |
| Bonin | Bonwick |
| Borotsik | Boudria |
| Bourgeois | Bradshaw |
| Breitkreuz | Brien |
| Brisson | Brown |
| Bryden | Burton |
| Byrne | Caccia |
| Cadman | Calder |
| Cannis | Caplan |
| Cardin | Carignan |
| Casson | Castonguay |
| Catterall | Chamberlain |
| Charbonneau | Chatters |
| Chrétien | Coderre |
| Collette | Comuzzi |
| Copps | Cotler |
| Crête | Cullen |
| Cummins | Cuzner |
| Day | Desrochers |
| DeVillers | Dhaliwal |
| Doyle | Dromisky |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Drouin | Dubé |
| Duceppe | Duhamel |
| Duplain | Eggleton |
| Elley | Epp |
| Eyking | Farrah |
| Finlay | Fontana |
| Forseth | Fournier |
| Fry | Gagliano |
| Gagnon (Champlain) | Gagnon (Québec) |
| Gallant | Galloway |
| Girard-Bujold | Godfrey |
| Goldring | Goodale |
| Gouk | Graham |
| Gray (Windsor West) | Grey (Edmonton North) |
| Grose | Guarnieri |
| Guay | Harris |
| Harvard | Harvey |
| Hearn | Herron |
| Hill (Macleod) | Hill (Prince George—Peace River) |
| Hilstrom | Hubbard |
| Ianno | Jackson |
| Jaffer | Jennings |
| Johnston | Jordan |
| Kenney (Calgary Southeast) | Keyes |
| Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast) | Knutson |
| Kraft Sloan | Laframboise |
| Laliberte | Lastewka |
| Lavigne | Lebel |
| Lee | Leung |
| Lincoln | Longfield |
| Loubier | Lunn (Saanic—Gulf Islands) |
| MacAulay | MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough) |
| Macklin | Mahoney |
| Malhi | Maloney |
| Manning | Marceau |
| Marcil | Mark |
| Marleau | Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca) |
| Matthews | Mayfield |
| McCallum | McCormick |
| McGuire | McKay (Scarborough East) |
| McLellan | McNally |
| McTeague | Ménard |
| Meredith | Merrifield |
| Mills (Red Deer) | Mills (Toronto—Danforth) |
| Mitchell | Moore |
| Murphy | Myers |
| Nault | Neville |
| Normand | O'Brien (London—Fanshawe) |
| O'Reilly | Obhrai |
| Owen | Pagtakhan |
| Pallister | Pankiw |
| Paquette | Paradis |
| Parrish | Peric |
| Perron | Peschisolido |
| Phinney | Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex) |
| Pillitteri | Plamondon |
| Proulx | Provenzano |
| Rajotte | Redman |
| Reed (Halton) | Regan |
| Reid (Lanark—Carleton) | Reynolds |
| Richardson | Ritz |
| Robillard | Rocheleau |
| Rock | Roy |
| Saada | Sauvageau |
| Savoy | Scherrer |
| Schmidt | Scott |
| Serré | Sgro |
| Shepherd | Skelton |
| Solberg | Sorenson |
| Speller | Spencer |
| St. Denis | St-Hilaire |
| St-Jacques | St-Julien |
| Steckle | Stewart |
| Stinson | Strahl |
| Szabo | Thibault (West Nova) |
| Thibeault (Saint-Lambert) | Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest) |
| Thompson (Wild Rose) | Tirabassi |
| Tobin | Toews |
| Tonks | Torsney |
| Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay) | Ur |
| Valeri | Vanclief |
| Vellacott | |

Private Members' Business

Venne
Wayne
Wilfert
Wood

Volpe
Whelan
Williams
Yelich—237

NAYS

Members

Blaikie
Davies
Godin
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Proctor
Wasylycia-Leis—11

Comartin
Desjarlais
Lill
Nystrom
Robinson

PAIRED MEMBERS

Augustine
Bulte
Cauchon
Dion
Guimond
Lalonde
Minna
Picard (Drummond)

Bergeron
Carroll
Dalphond-Guiral
Gauthier
Harb
Lanctôt
Patry
Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis)

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development be authorized to travel to Paris, France from May 13-17, 2001 to attend an OECD conference on environmental and economic issues.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House give its consent for the parliamentary secretary to table the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It being 6 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

ST. JOHN'S HARBOUR

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should immediately commit its one-third share of the funding for the St. John's harbour cleanup

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on my private member's motion I submitted for debate here in the House of Commons concerning St. John's harbour.

Why, hon. members may ask, is St. John's harbour worthy of special mention here in the House of Commons? How is St. John's harbour special in the context of the business here in the House of Commons?

Let me tell all hon. members here in the House that St. John's is not just another city. It is one of the oldest cities in the new world. It is the most easterly city in North America and, as such, is Canada's easternmost gateway. It is a capital city where responsible government took root long before there was a nation called Canada.

St. John's is history and it is culture personified. This year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of Marconi's wireless speech. The site of these celebrations is up on Signal Hill, just above the harbour.

St. John's harbour is the recipient of 120 million litres of raw sewage every single day. That is more than 43 billion litres per year. The narrow entrance to the harbour prevents the sea from effectively flushing the harbour of pollutants. As a result, the Sierra Club in 1994 gave St. John's harbour an F on the national sewage report card. In 1999 it downgraded that F to an F minus.

• (1805)

In 1993 the St. John's harbour ACAP committee was formed. ACAP stands for Atlantic coastal action program, a program set up by Environment Canada to assist Atlantic Canadians in restoring and sustaining watershed areas in adjacent coastal towns.

With regard to the St. John's harbour cleanup, the ACAP committee is doing a very good job in keeping the harbour pollution issue in the public eye. It is a problem that the mayor of the city of St. John's and the adjacent municipalities of Mount Pearl and Paradise are working overtime to cure.

The mayor of the city of St. John's is in the gallery here today. He held a press conference in Ottawa today in an effort to draw national public attention to what is a very serious environmental issue.

Private Members' Business

The leader of the opposition in the house of assembly in Newfoundland, Mr. Byrne, was in the gallery today. He travelled here to show his support for this particular issue.

One might ask why the federal government should be involved in the cleanup of St. John's harbour. The federal government must have placed a priority on these projects at one time because the Atlantic coastal action program is a federal program. I do not understand why the federal government would set up a program like that if it were not prepared to help out financially in the process of environmental cleanup.

The federal government is already involved in that project in that it did commit a paltry \$1.5 million to the project. However, those token gestures on the part of the federal government are not enough. We need the federal government to kick in its one-third share of that \$93 million project.

Federal funding has been applied for but to date there has been no response. There has been no indication from Newfoundland's federal cabinet minister that he is even remotely interested in this project. We should not need a special program to deal with a \$93 million project like harbour cleanup. From a multibillion dollar national infrastructure program, Newfoundland gets only a minuscule amount simply because these funds are distributed on a per capita basis.

Some 93% of Canadians who are serviced by sewer systems have at least primary sewage treatment. Less than 50% of the people of Atlantic Canada have any kind of primary sewage treatment. We have much less than that in Newfoundland. We probably only have 5%, 4% or 3%. The bottom line is that our need is much greater than the rest of Canada and that fact should be reflected in the amount of funding we get.

A Memorial University economist by the name of Dr. Wade Locke did a cost benefit analysis of this project. If we consider the tax revenues to the Government of Canada during the construction and over the 25 year lifespan of that project, the analysis shows that the government would take in more than twice the \$31 million cost of that project. In other words, in terms of the national treasury, over the long run the federal government would be money in. If the Minister of Industry is unable to take anything else to the cabinet table, he is able to take that fact to convince his colleagues to make money available for this project.

This was a big issue during the national federal election campaign. During the dying days of that campaign, the Minister of Industry, flanked by his two St. John's candidates, called a news conference on the waterfront of St. John's. The people of St. John's held their collective breath expecting the minister would make a financial commitment to the harbour cleanup project.

• (1810)

Instead, all we got from the Minister of Industry, as usual, was baffle and a firm promise that he would work very hard on making money available for the St. John's harbour cleanup.

The minister is now back in Ottawa and all we have heard from him on the harbour cleanup project is dead silence. The Minister of Industry has done nothing.

Because of that inaction, I submitted the motion today for debate in the House of Commons. Since it has been several months since the federal election, I would ask the minister today what he has done to advance the cause of the St. John's harbour cleanup. Obviously the minister has done nothing.

The Minister of Industry is an individual who loves to deliver. Since the federal election he has made the rounds of the entire country announcing hundreds of millions of dollars worth of projects in every conceivable industry in city after city, everything from genetic research to building airplanes, but still not a single penny for the St. John's harbour cleanup project.

I am sorry to be continually yapping at the heels of Newfoundland's industry minister. I know it must be an awful distraction from his leadership ambitions. However, let me say that he might as well get used to it because as long as I am in the House the Minister of Industry will not get off the hook on this one. He made the promise and he will have to deliver. This is a very serious environmental issue for the city of St. John's and it will not go away.

Let me also say that this is a minister who has taken on the senior and leading role in the government. However, in the Newfoundland context, so far at least, he is no Don Jamieson, no John Crosbie and no Jim McGrath. These gentlemen not only stood tall in the nation, they delivered at home as well. This minister is not delivering the goods to fix the problem that is an environmental hazard and a major deterrent to tourism in North America's oldest city and one of the most beautiful cities in our country.

What will the minister do to advance the cause of the St. John's harbour cleanup?

At the beginning of the last election, the Prime Minister and the industry minister contributed about a half billion dollars to give Toronto harbour a facelift. I supported that. However, the reason they made that contribution was to make Toronto harbour more aesthetically pleasing and to get it ready for an Olympic bid. Again, I support that. The Olympics are very important to Toronto, fine and dandy, but, I ask members of the House, where is the fairness in that kind of approach? It was a half billion dollars to a harbour in Toronto to make it more aesthetically pleasing for an Olympic bid and thumbs down on St. John's that has a very serious environmental problem.

The environment minister was recently mentioned in his local paper for getting \$4.5 million for Victoria harbour, Canada's most westerly capital city. I support that. It is a good project and it should have money. However, it looks like the ministers from Ontario and B.C. know how to deliver the goods.

Private Members' Business

What is wrong with our minister? Why can he not deliver? Perhaps he has other ambitions or priorities. I hope he does not because he has a duty to his province and to his province's capital city. He loves to use the jargon "we are working on that file". Let me say to him that he should get to work. This file needs national attention. It is time for the minister to keep the promise he made to the people in November on the waterfront in the city of St. John's. The minister is not good at keeping his promises but he had better start because this one will not go away.

• (1815)

If Newfoundland's minister feels lonely at the cabinet table when he is looking for money for St. John's, he should remind his mainland colleagues that Newfoundland became part of Canada back in 1949. If Canada wants our fish, paper, iron ore, hydro power and oil, it should treat us like we are part of Canada.

We are not being treated like we are part of this great nation. We have made our contribution to the nation and it is time that the nation came to our aid on this issue. When we are faced with a group of Newfoundlanders being forced to live among sewage, we are faced with a group of Canadians that are being forced to live among sewage.

When a German tourist looks over the rail of a cruise ship at the mess floating in St. John's harbour, he does not ask how Newfoundlanders put up with that. He wonders how Canadians put up with that kind of mess.

St. John's is Canada's easternmost city. It is a gateway. Due to the history and culture of the place, and being a port of call for the American and European cruise ships, tourism is a very important industry; it is a growth industry. The mayor of the city of St. John's and his council have done a fantastic job in attracting cruise ships. They have doubled the number of cruise ships coming into St. John's. They deserve a great deal of consideration and compliments for what they have been able to do, but they do not have the federal government and the Ministry of Industry at the moment helping out with their great effort.

This harbour is a health hazard. Studies have shown that sediment on the bottom of the harbour is laced with chemical pollutants and heavy metals. St. John's harbour is a septic soup that is an environmental time bomb. What has the Minister of Industry, Newfoundland's federal cabinet minister, done about it? He has done absolutely nothing. He has given no indication that he even cares. It is about time the minister came to the aid of this very important project.

The harbour cleanup project is not an optional nicety. We are not looking to dress up our harbour to grease the wheels of an Olympic bid. We want to lessen the health risks to our people and at the same time help to develop a fledgling tourism industry that the

mayor of the city of St. John's and his council are working very hard on.

St. John's is North America's oldest city and it plays a very historic role in the country. Newfoundlanders should not have to get down on their knees begging, scratching and pleading with the federal government to make money available for this project. The federal minister representing Newfoundland should be front and centre on this issue. He should go to the office of the mayor of the city of St. John's and to the various municipalities in the province and offer help on this project because they are doing such a good job.

The minister has done nothing on this project. He refuses to even be in the House today to talk about this issue and to hear what is being—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I was listening attentively as all other members were and I would remind members that we cannot refer to the presence or, more specifically, the absence of members. We all know our time requirements and that I do not want to take anything away from the passionate and strong feelings of the hon. member and other members who might join in the debate.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this is another environmental issue. There have been many during the last eight years I have been here. Again we look at promises and at the politics being played with the issue of the environment.

I had the privilege of going to St. John's during a byelection. I saw the harbour and the history of the place. It is a beautiful spot. One of the things that I was shown in the harbour was the emission of raw sewage into the ocean. At first I did not understand. I could not imagine that in a G-8 country, in an advanced country called Canada, we would be dumping raw sewage into the ocean. I would expect that in developing countries. They have little choice. They have no resources to take care of sewage, but I did not expect that in Canada.

• (1820)

Then I found out that it is not the only place where we are dumping raw sewage. We are dumping raw sewage into the ocean in the beautiful city of Victoria. When we say we have a problem and there is too much sewage lying around on our beaches, the answer is that we put the pipe out a little farther into the ocean.

That is hardly sewage treatment. That is hardly something hon. members would expect in a country like Canada. As I mentioned earlier today in the debate about water, we sell our technology. We sell water treatment plants and sewage treatment plants to developing countries. In Canada we have at least two cities where we are putting raw sewage directly into the ocean. That is a disgrace.

Private Members' Business

In St. John's harbour, 120 million litres per day of raw sewage are dumped directly into the ocean, letting the tides carry it away and becoming someone else's problem. All members should be shocked by that kind of information. We should be reacting to it immediately. There are bacteria, pathogens, phosphorous, nitrogen, heavy metals, visible pollutants lying everywhere, and baby diapers, condoms and needles lying on the beaches.

The hon. member who raised the issue talked about the numerous cruise ships going by. What do they think about Canada when they see and hear about that sort of thing? There is not only the health hazard the hon. member has mentioned, but the shame and the embarrassment that we as Canadians have to live with.

I see the money that is wasted in planet Ottawa and some of the programs that are funded. It is shocking that we would even need a private member's motion on an issue as basic as water and sewage.

I see how politics are played. I do not say I understand politics in Atlantic Canada all that well. I hear how people are told at public meetings that if they vote a certain way the money will be made available for a sewage treatment plant. That is not the way the government should play with environmental issues. It is not a partisan political issue. Taking care of sewage is a basic thing that a country does. Whether Canadians vote Liberal, NDP, Conservative or Alliance should not matter when it comes to putting raw sewage into the ocean.

I also looked at the Sydney tar ponds, which our party has been looking at for eight years now. Again we see how little is being done and how much politics is being played. There is a face-off between the industry minister and the environment minister for who can have the dirtiest harbour. That is not something I would like to say I represented if I were either the industry minister or the environment minister. I certainly would not want to list on my credentials that my city's raw sewage is going into the ocean. It is certainly not something we would want to talk about.

How do we deal with environmental issues? Obviously the list could be very long. What we do or what we expect from our federal government is leadership. It should not pass the buck. It should not say that it is this level of government or that level of government. It must recognize that environment is a provincial issue and in many cases is a municipal issue.

What should be the role of the federal government? Its role should be one of leadership, of providing research money and expertise to the provinces and territories to help them help the municipalities.

• (1825)

We do not even know what our aquifers are and whether or not we are polluting them. We do not have nor do we use the technology to look at our water supply.

Sewage is another matter. We really do not use the most modern technologies in many cases. We do not have a set of standards for testing. Some have primary treatment, some have secondary, some have tertiary and some have none. Obviously, that is not the sort of Canada that most of us want environmentally. The federal government should provide leadership and initiative to deal with these kinds of basic problems.

The matter of garbage is a favourite of mine. I have been visiting garbage landfill sites in different countries to see how they deal with garbage for probably 35 years. I remember sitting next to the mayor of Vienna. I asked him casually over dinner what his city did with its garbage. I told him that I had looked at the garbage facilities in Frankfurt, Amsterdam, London, Miami, New York and a lot of Canadian cities as well.

He told me that he would show me what they did. At 11 o'clock at night we drove downtown and came to a building that looked like an apartment building. Inside was a recycling facility and an incinerator.

Vienna's biggest problem is that it cannot get enough garbage. It is now purchasing garbage from surrounding communities and bringing it in train loads so that the plant is kept fully functional.

That is the kind of thing that Canadians should be promoting and utilizing whether for recycling, composting or incineration. The technology is there. The technology to handle the sewage problem in St. John's harbour is not rocket science. It is just a matter of getting the job done and being committed to doing it.

We should also look at our air situation. I will give an example that is similar to St. John's harbour or Victoria. There is an area in the Fraser Valley that is the second most polluted air shed in Canada. Southern Ontario is the most polluted and this area is the second.

California is short of energy. It cannot build power plants there because they pollute. Washington does not allow high tensile lines to go over the top of populated areas. Guess what they are going to do? They have decided to build power plants along the border on the Washington side. California gets its power and Washington gets the profit. Canada gets the pollution and the high tensile lines.

That is the sort of thing that Canadians cannot allow. We cannot allow raw sewage into the oceans. We cannot allow pollution to come across our border without raising a fuss about it. We have to deal with our sewage problem and modernize our garbage disposal.

Canada's environmental record needs to be improved. At the present time it is dismal. We need to stop playing politics with the environment and get on with the job of creating a cleaner environment for all Canadians.

Private Members' Business

Mr. John Cannis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue for each and every Canadian no matter where they live. I would like to respond briefly to the member for St. John's East who spoke with such passion about this very important issue.

• (1830)

However, I find it very unacceptable and disheartening when a member in the hon. House tries to destroy a member by saying that he does not care and that he has not participated.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, you were a member of the House at that time and you remember very well when he was the minister of fisheries. He went to bat for the province and the Atlantic provinces. He brought the issues front and centre and got results and spoke with passion.

The hon. member knows that very well. It is unfortunate that he did not stick to the issue at hand but tried to politicize. As the hon. member from the Alliance said, let us take the politics out of it, and I agree with him. This is not an issue of politics.

Let me point out that the Government of Canada has made and will continue to make serious commitments to the protection of our environment and to the reclamation of our threatened lands and, of course, waters.

The current situation, whereby untreated sewage empties into St. John's harbour, is unacceptable to me, to the minister, to the Prime Minister, to the government and I know to the country as a whole. It is important that the situation be addressed in a manner acceptable and feasible for the city of St. John's, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada.

I am fully aware that the municipal and provincial governments have committed to cost sharing the necessary cleanup. I believe that this approach will expedite our efforts to address this most important issue.

For this reason, we are working to identify an appropriate mechanism for funding this kind of undertaking. The estimated cost for the construction of a required primary treatment plant is \$93 million. The only program currently in place to facilitate federal contributions to municipal infrastructure is of course the Canada infrastructure program, which is cost shared with provincial and municipal governments.

The existing Canada-Newfoundland infrastructure works program has committed funds totalling \$153 million over five years. These funds were allocated to assist in building and improving infrastructure in more than 400 communities, incorporated areas, of course, and the local service districts in Newfoundland and Labrador. The municipal infrastructure requirements in this, Canada's fourth largest province, are broad based, pan-provincial and in some cases very urgent.

There are, for example, as many as 240 boil water orders in effect right now on any given day in areas that do not enjoy the basic advantage of reliable, safe drinking water.

On October 13, 2000, the Canada-Newfoundland infrastructure agreement was signed, with an allocation of \$51 million in federal funds for Newfoundland and Labrador. I would like to point that out.

Unfortunately the existing program, while substantial, cannot meet the existing demand. For the current fiscal year alone, \$250 million in water and sewer management projects have been proposed for the province. The \$93 million required to put an adequate sewage treatment facility in place in the capital city of St. John's is not included in that sum.

The Canada-Newfoundland infrastructure works program has a specific mandate to provide assistance in the ongoing development of appropriate and essential infrastructure in communities throughout the province. It would be inappropriate to commit in excess of half of that funding to one project.

This in no way diminishes the importance of finding a solution to this unacceptable situation in St. John's harbour. It would be inadvisable and counterproductive, let me say, to make short term, reactive promises in response to an issue of this importance.

I would like to assure the hon. member, members in the House as well, and of course the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, that the minister will continue to work with his cabinet colleagues and municipal and provincial partners to find an appropriate long term solution to the problem.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate on this motion by the hon. member for St. John's East.

The position of the Bloc Québécois, and mine by the same token, is based on the opportunities cities had in the past and which they lost over the last few years. They are slowly getting them back, but they are far from meeting all the needs of Canadian municipalities in infrastructure, and waste and water treatment.

• (1835)

In a not too distant previous incarnation, just last year, I quit as president of the Union des municipalités du Québec. I can say that Canadian cities have been hard hit by the deep cuts in federal transfers to the provinces made in 1992.

In 1998 alone, Quebec municipalities have contributed \$730 million to the Quebec government to help erase the deficit and meet the needs in health care and education. Since 1992, with a government of the Liberal Party in 1992 and of the Parti Québécois in 1998, Quebec municipalities have had to make a more signifi-

cant contribution. In Quebec, this was a bill that was paid in part to the government of Quebec, but the municipalities saw their budgets cut by \$730 million.

I am sure that a similar situation exists right across Canada, with the federal government's cuts in health and education. Let us not forget that in 2001 federal transfers to the provinces for health care will only be as high as they were in 1993. No miracles are made with the taxpayer money and we all know that people do not want more tax increases.

What did the provincial governments do? They reduced in turn their transfer payments to the lower levels, basically the transfers and support they were providing to the cities for various programs, including the water purification program.

I am not surprised to see that in 2001 the City of St. John's, Newfoundland is faced with a sewage problem, which it has not yet found a way to solve, and a horrendous \$30 million bill. The problem is simple. The level of government funding for the tripartite infrastructure program is insufficient.

The speech that the government member just gave proves it. What he said was that there was not enough money to respond to the 400 demands in the province of Newfoundland alone.

The problem is much larger amounts need to be earmarked for infrastructure programs. Since 1992, cities have had to contribute to the higher levels of governments' deficit reduction efforts. The federal government started things off by shifting the deficit burden to the provinces and provinces then dumped their problems partly on the municipalities and partly on various other health and education institutions.

We are just coming out of a large operation to put public finances back in order, but let us not forget that municipalities provide frontline services to the population. We tend very easily to think that this costs nothing, but when we get up in the morning and flush the toilet or turn on the faucet, we must never forget that the quality of life we enjoy in our beautiful provinces and also in Canada is largely due to the municipalities that take care of water treatment, wastewater treatment and garbage collection.

Those are things we often forget. People too often forget that there are costs involved and that the municipalities have to meet them.

I sympathize with the mayor of St. John's, Newfoundland. That city should have the resources needed to treat its wastewater. It should have, in the year 2001, the amounts required to deal with what is now one of life's necessities, wastewater treatment.

In this regard, we could recommend that the government be receptive to all municipal applications regarding the needs identi-

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fied as a result of studies. A major study had to be conducted by municipalities across Canada before they could submit their applications under the tripartite program.

In Quebec municipalities need \$10 billion to deal with infrastructure problems of all kinds. The \$10 billion will only be spread over the next ten years. They need \$10 billion dollars to maintain their water systems, sewage treatment systems and transportation systems in reasonably good shape.

The tripartite infrastructure program announced in its last budgets by the federal government will only give Quebec \$1.5 billion over the next five years, which is 15% of what Quebec municipalities need. I am sure the situation is the same across Canada. It is too little, and in the case of St. John's, Newfoundland, it is too late, because considerable damage is being caused to the environment by not dealing with such a serious problem as water purification. We are always waiting for the federal government because that is how we are able to calculate investments made by the provinces and municipalities.

• (1840)

I would even go as far as to say that, on top of that, all municipalities along the St. Lawrence River, along the St. Lawrence Seaway and along Canada's entire coastline need a specific envelope for decontamination and cleanup to repair the damage caused by nature and man in the last few years.

These municipalities need special assistance. There should be a special envelope for municipalities along the coasts of Quebec and Canada, including along the St. Lawrence Seaway, in order to meet this urgent need to fight pollution and to be environmentally correct, if we want our country to be at the forefront of the fight against pollution.

The Bloc Québécois will support all municipalities and cities that try to take charge of their own destiny and need money to compensate the big revenue loss caused indirectly by the federal government since 1992. Cities had to part with billions of dollars to help provincial governments and Quebec deal with health care and education problems.

It is inconceivable that in 2001 federal transfers to the provinces are at the 1993 level. When health care was implemented in Canada, the federal share of the costs was 50%. It stands now at 25%, while costs keep rising for the provinces. In Quebec health costs will double over the next five years. Obviously, federal transfers will not increase at the same rate, even if we are told that agreements have been signed. True enough, the provinces have signed agreements on infrastructure programs.

Private Members' Business

We are supposed to be glad with everything that is being signed. Of course, half a loaf is better than no loaf. Premiers sign agreements with the federal government because it is better than nothing and because it will help their communities and citizens. However we should not forget that Canadian cities need much more.

I will say it again, St. John's deserves this federal investment. It deserves to have the federal government pay one third, and the provincial government and the municipal government will also each pay one third.

[English]

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think it is appropriate that this private member's bill is being brought forward today given today's debate in the House on water and the obviously detrimental effect it has on the citizens of this country and on their health when it is not adequately protected.

That, to a great degree, is what the bill is about. I would like to thank the Progressive Conservative member for St. John's East for having brought forward the bill and giving us this opportunity to debate it.

I will take this opportunity to quote some material. One of the quotes I found is from the *Telegram* newspaper in Newfoundland from October 24 of last year. This is how the harbour was described: "The harbour, a noxious stew of feces, condoms, tampons, rubber gloves and everything else that gets flushed down the thousands of toilets in the metro area, has long been an environmental embarrassment".

What is interesting is the date that the article appeared in that paper because of course it was not long before the last federal election. The present Minister of Industry was quoted at that time as saying that he would "work as hard and as smart" as he could to bring sewage treatment to the region, appropriately so, as we also have the Minister of the Environment in the government—again I am paraphrasing but reflecting the positions he has taken—on the record, recognizing that the lack of sewage treatment is a serious threat to the sustainability of coastal communities, affecting human health, constraining economic development and compromising ecosystem integrity through the release of toxic substances into freshwater and marine ecosystems.

• (1845)

He should also be working as hard and as smart as one of his other fellow ministers, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans who went further than the Minister of the Environment in his threatened legal action against those poisoning the waters of the Atlantic by the discharge of raw sewage. I am talking about the city of St. John's which the fisheries minister is to sue.

After all the work that has been done and the history in terms of the amount of pollutants being released into the water in that area, we still have no involvement of any consequence by the federal government. It is important to recognize the amount of work that has been done by both the province and the municipality in terms of their one-third shares. They have to be acknowledged in that regard.

In the legislature of Newfoundland yesterday Mr. Harris, a member of the New Democratic Party in that house, asked the premier what was happening in terms of the cleanup of St. John's harbour. Basically he received this response:

Unfortunately, I do have to report that we have no definite commitment from the Government of Canada yet with respect to their one-third share. We have made a firm request, repeatedly, that they participate with a special fund, and a separate fund, for an initiative as important as the clean up of the St. John's harbour.

Then he indicated they would continue to do that and were expecting at some point that the federal government would come through. He went on to acknowledge the comment that Mr. Harris had made earlier about the fact that the provincial government and the municipality involved had committed their one-third shares. Yet there has been no action by the federal government.

I come back to where we were today in the debate on water and the motion we passed earlier in support of setting national standards. It is typical of the federal government that it is willing to support that type of motion but when confronted with the reality of the necessary action we see no response.

We have the municipality kicking in its \$31 million. The provincial government in Newfoundland is kicking in its \$31 million. They are prepared to do so and ready to go. They even have a design of the plant and the piping required to make the system work appropriately and safely for the protection of the environment and the health of the people of St. John's.

They have done all that work and the only missing piece is a commitment from the federal government. They still do not see it. If the federal government were serious when it supported the motion that was passed earlier, it would act when an occasion like this one comes forward. We are in strong support of the motion and of the needed action and would vote accordingly.

• (1850)

Mr. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the motion put forward by the hon. member for St. John's East respecting the proposed St. John's harbour cleanup.

It always behoves me to remind the hon. member for St. John's East, being a good fellow from St. John's, that there are other issues, other harbour cleanups that have been proposed for other parts of the island of Newfoundland and indeed throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

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I would like to promote the concept of a harbour cleanup in Corner Brook. The Atlantic coastal action program, the *Humber Arm* group, have been proponents of that endeavour for quite some time. I would have liked to have as well included in this motion in terms of its context and wording a more all inclusive, a more encompassing debate and a more encompassing discussion written right into the text of the motion itself.

This being a debate, we are allowed to go the full gambit of basically how it will proceed. I would like to provide some discussion about priorities and about expanding the mandate. The House engaged in a discussion just this afternoon about priorities. This is an opposition day on which we discussed at length the need for national regulation on clean, clear drinking water as a priority matter. It was put forward by the Conservative caucus, by the Conservative Party as the priority.

If we look at the recent round of infrastructure programs put forward in my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador, we did respond to what our people, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, said were their priorities, as would be noted by the hon. member from the Conservative caucus. We invested literally tens of millions of dollars into clean, clear drinking water in communities and as a matter of fact in rural communities. This is something of which I am very proud and has to be explored.

On the issue of harbour cleanup, the hon. member has put forward that the municipality of St. John's has put up \$31 million. The rubber is ready to hit the road. The pedal is ready to be put to the metal. The province has also put up \$31 million. A total \$62 million is committed.

I would like to pose a question. Is it possible with \$62 million already sourced that the project could now begin? Given the fact that it probably would be initiated over a 10 year period, an extended period of time, that the commitment is genuine and real and that the need is there, which I think the hon. member opposite has proven quite effectively, could the \$62 million be put into play immediately?

We determine our priorities and our commitments and put forward money for municipal infrastructure that provide for clean, clear water. We put money forward for municipal sewer systems in rural communities. If St. John's harbour cleanup is the priority, as the hon. member says, and I agree with him, we have an opportunity to put \$62 million in play, not tomorrow, but today, right now, on the floor of the House if the hon. member consents.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the inadequate time that I have been given to address this very important issue. I offer my support and congratulations to the member for raising the issue in the House. I would also like to pay some deserved tribute to the

mayor of St. John's for his continued efforts on behalf of the constituents that he shares with the member.

This is an issue which has been treated in an excessively partisan way by the government opposite in that during the federal election campaign it made eminently clear to the people of St. John's when the industry minister travelled there that the project was one he supported. That was borne out by the fact that as premier of Newfoundland he supported the project himself.

During the federal election he went further than that and encouraged the people of St. John's to vote for the Liberal candidates, arguing that would give him allies and encourage him in his ability to generate funding support for the project. That is where we step over the line. That is when we make partisanship blatant. When we do that we remove any credibility to argue that fairness is the basis upon which funds are allocated for projects such as this one.

This does not need to be a partisan issue. This is an issue of a dirty harbour that needs to be cleaned up. I know the member opposite would agree that is the issue we should be talking about.

● (1855)

I raised a simple question in the House with the environment minister in question period. I asked him why he would tell the mayor of St. John's that there were no funds available from his department and subsequent to that announce that funds were available for a project in his own riding.

I thought it was a very fair and reasonable question. An opportunity was provided for him to respond. All he did was launch into personal attacks about me. That was not fruitful. It did not lend any credibility to the government's rationale for its criteria and priorities on issues such as this one.

Opportunity was provided today for both ministers to rise in their places to participate in the debates by saying what are their priorities and how they determine the criteria for allocating funds to these kinds of projects. Rather they give the mayor of St. John's the runaround and waste his valuable time. As hard as he wants to work for the people of St. John's he would like to have a partner in the federal government. I can understand that.

There is only one taxpayer out there. We have heard many times that one taxpayer pays provincial tax, municipal tax and federal tax. One taxpayer expects to get services from government. It is a shame when government seems to insist on being partisan to an excessive degree and interfering with the basic co-operative approaches that should be taken on infrastructure projects such as this one.

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That is what we are seeing with this project. We are seeing a willingness to put partisan self-interest ahead of fairness. It is clearly evident. The Liberal candidate in St. John's East was asked on the night of the election whether St. John's would be punished by its refusal to send Liberals to the House of Commons. His answer was that it had nothing to do with punishment but with reality.

If that is the reality of government members opposite, they should stand and be honest about it. If this is about partisanship and rewarding ridings that vote Liberal, the government should say so. It seems clearly evident that is the case. That is most unfortunate, because the project is deserving of support. I stand in support of the member and encourage the government to take action on this resolution so it can go forward.

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC): Mr. Speaker, I thank all of my colleagues for their submissions on this very important issue. I thank the Alliance members, the NDP members, the Bloc members, members of the backbench and the Liberal caucus for their remarks as well.

It is too bad that we have to come to the House of Commons to make a case for a project that is very basic and vital to the development of one of North America's oldest and most beautiful cities. However we have to come here because of the inaction of government. We have to come here because politicians make promises during election campaigns that they have absolutely no intention of ever keeping.

It is getting all too common that this type of politics is infiltrating the country. People stand and make promises. They have no intention of ever keeping them. They want to get through a couple of weeks or months in an election campaign. They hope the public will have a very short memory and that it will all go away.

The public does not forget. We cannot let the industry minister forget the promises he has made to the people in St. John's to get this project moving. This project deserves to be moved along. Some 120 million litres of raw sewage a day is going into one of the most beautiful harbours in the world. If we do the mathematics, 43 billion litres of raw sewage per year go into St. John's harbour. Is it any wonder that in 1994 the environmental watchdog, the Sierra club, gave this project an F and in 1999 downgraded it even further to an F-minus? I do not know how much further it can go than that.

• (1900)

I want to make a comment about the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry who came here with a prepared text today. I am really surprised that he did not even run the remarks by his boss before he came here, saying that we could take advantage of the Canada-Newfoundland infrastructure program to fund the project.

There is only \$50 million from the federal government over a five year period. There are hundreds of small municipalities for that \$50 million over five years or \$10 million a year. The Minister of Industry himself has indicated that we cannot apply under that program to have St. John's harbour cleaned up. It has to be a separate side agreement.

Let me say to the other Newfoundland member, the member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, who said that since we have \$60 million committed to it now why would we not proceed. We cannot proceed. There is an agreement involving the municipalities of Mount Pearl, Paradise, St. John's and the provincial government and it cannot kick in until the federal government comes up with its share of the funding.

It is conceivable to say that the project will never move ahead unless the federal government comes up with its share of the money for the project.

I want to compliment the people who do so much work on this from year to year and who do not get discouraged. The city of St. John's has been working very hard on it, along with the mayor. There are the ACAP people who put their backs into it on a daily basis as well and try to keep it in the public eye. They are the people we should be complimenting for the work they have put into it, not the politicians.

If the Minister of Industry has any feeling that getting the money would somehow give some credit to me or the member of the Alliance or NDP for the very limited submissions we have made, he can forget about it. That is not the case at all. Making money available for this project would be saying thanks to the people who have made such a difference, people like the mayor of the city of St. John's, the people on the St. John's city council and the ACAP people. They are the people who deserve the real credit for the effort that has gone into this so far.

I sincerely hope that the Minister of Industry is back in his office somewhere listening to this and will take it into account, into consideration, step up to the plate and make money available for what is a very good project.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated a votable item, the order is dropped from the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to again rise in the House of Commons to speak to an issue of utmost urgency concerning the people of east Vancouver.

On several occasions in the past two months alone, including today, I have pressed the government on its lacklustre response on the health crisis of drug use, overdoses and safety. In fact, for four years I have been raising this and will keep on until I am satisfied that the federal government and the Minister of Health are doing all that can be done to save lives, improve the health and safety of my community and stop the criminalization of injection drug users who are dying at an alarming rate.

There are now so many expert reports, including that from the city of Vancouver, that it boggles the mind that leadership and action are so slow to follow. One of the most recent studies shows that female drug users are twice as likely to be infected with HIV-AIDS as men. This is the first time that this has happened in the developed world.

Since 1997 I have been pushing for a comprehensive strategy. I have called on the Minister of Health to adopt multicentre heroin prescription trials, safe injection sites, better housing and social support to users. All of these things will significantly improve the health of injection drug users as well as safety in the community. It will also reduce crime. If there is any doubt about this we have only to look to Europe to see the success of such an approach.

● (1905)

I do want to acknowledge that the federal government has provided some response. I am glad that the minister has responded to some of the concerns and has provided support for drug users, for example, by supporting the drug resource centre which unfortunately has yet to open. It has been mired in development permits and appeals in the city of Vancouver. Also, there is now talk of a feasibility study on clinical trials for drug maintenance. In my several meetings with the minister, I have always found him to be knowledgeable and sympathetic.

Up to now the RCMP has been opposed to safe injection sites and clinical trials for drug maintenance. Therefore it is very significant that the chief superintendent of the RCMP's drug enforcement program is now saying that the government should consider safe injection sites. This is a significant development and cannot be ignored, but it would require federal approval from the Minister of Health.

I want to say to the government today, for heaven's sake, let us get on with it now. I ask the government to be courageous and listen to what its own experts are saying.

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In Australia the first legal heroin injection room opened a few days ago. Canada can be next. Canada can and must move on this issue. We can prevent needless deaths. We can prevent crime, which causes so much distress in my community and other communities across the country. We can stem the flow of wasted resources in law enforcement and judicial systems. We can change Canada's drug laws, which are badly in need of reform. What it takes is political will.

I ask the Minister of Health to stand tall, to be resolved to take this issue on and to listen to what his own experts are saying.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer the questions raised by the member for Vancouver East regarding clinical trials to assess the effectiveness of heroin in treating heroin addiction and HIV/AIDS in injection drug users.

[*English*]

Mayor Owen has met with Health Canada to discuss Canada's drug strategy and continued collaboration between Health Canada and the city of Vancouver. Health Canada is also a formal partner with the city of Vancouver and the province of British Columbia on the Vancouver agreement.

Mayor Owen's report on the injection drug use situation goes beyond any one initiative. A comprehensive response is required and the issue goes far beyond Health Canada. I am pleased to report that federal and provincial-territorial officials representing issues related to drugs, AIDS, hepatitis C, corrections, enforcement, justice, aboriginal peoples and population health have been working together to develop strategies to reduce the harm associated with injection drug use in Canada.

[*Translation*]

With regard to HIV/AIDS infection rates, the study results mentioned by the member in her original questions were preliminary. Health Canada takes into account the vulnerability of community members with a higher risk of infection, by working with other federal departments and public administrations within the framework of what is known as the Vancouver agreement.

With this in mind, Health Canada has just funded two projects in Vancouver downtown east side. One deals with alternate ways of providing counselling and education in order to help women get off the streets. The other targets the network of drug users in Vancouver and is aimed at providing advice and services to drug addicts.

[*English*]

Canada recognizes the gender implications of this global pandemic and has undertaken several initiatives such as the Canadian strategy on HIV-AIDS which supports research and other activities

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that meet the specific needs of women and girls in Canada and around the world.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, you have been more than generous to the people who have preceded me and I appreciate that.

I am here tonight in relation to a question regarding Lancaster Aviation which I have asked the Minister of National Defence on a number of occasions.

• (1910)

Lancaster Aviation, for the benefit of the general public and those who are interested, was awarded a contract by the federal government in 1997 to sell surplus military equipment spare parts. The concern is that the spare parts contract grew to include, without a tender process, 10 Challenger jets and 40 helicopters, far exceeding the original contract.

How could a company such as Lancaster Aviation go from selling spare parts to selling 10 Challenger aircraft and 40 helicopters? It is very obvious. There was an escape clause in the contract that allowed the government to do this. I guess it did it to reward its friends, if it wished.

We have a number of concerns on this file, one of them being that the Challenger aircraft, which were Government of Canada aircraft, were sold on the international market by a company called Lancaster for less than 50% of their value. The helicopters were sold in the same fashion. How is something like that allowed to happen?

Then we found out that Lancaster Aviation closed its doors in Milton, Ontario. It took the equipment, up to \$70 million worth of Canadian goods owned by the Government of Canada, and housed it in Florida in a warehouse owned by a convicted felon who is under contract with Lancaster Aviation.

Our concern is how and why those spare parts were allowed to leave Canada. Lancaster Aviation closed up its operations, closed its warehouse in Canada, only to move goods owned by the Government of Canada across the border.

Incidentally, the individual has not yet been sentenced, but he is up on money laundering charges and on leading an international prostitution ring. We do not consider the individual to be a good corporate citizen.

My question to the parliamentary secretary is simple. Why would the Government of Canada allow this to happen? What security do we have on the assets now lying in a warehouse in Florida owned by a convicted felon who is awaiting sentencing? The laundered money was through the selling of drugs. What

happens to his assets? What happens to the contractual agreement between Lancaster Aviation and the individual in Florida? How much at risk are the parts owned by the Government of Canada?

I have a second part to my question. When did the Government of Canada realize that its goods were stored in a warehouse owned by a convicted felon? When did the minister know, how much did he know, and what action is the government taking today to secure the assets owned by the people of Canada and in a warehouse in Florida?

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the erroneous statements made by the hon. member tonight.

The government has had a competitive arrangement in place with Lancaster Aviation since 1997 for the disposal of surplus aerospace assets, not just spare parts as the hon. member has said.

The solicitation process was a rigorous one. It made sure that the successful bidder met three criteria: first, that it had the knowledge to sell such assets; second, that it could market the assets worldwide; and, third, that it could achieve the best return for taxpayers.

The contract was competed for in June 2000 and Lancaster Aviation was the successful bidder. How could the hon. member refer to it as an escape clause to help friends when it is the same company that won the competition?

• (1915)

Allegations that the contractor disposed of Twin Huey helicopters and the Challenger aircraft were sole sourced are false. It was a competitive process. The 1997 RFP contemplated special projects such as the sale of the planes. When such a need arises the process calls for an amendment to the contract to legally bind the parties. That is what we did with the sale of the Twin Huey helicopters and the Challenger aircraft.

I want to assure the House that the sale of the surplus aircraft was conducted to the letter of the law and in the interest of the Canadian taxpayers. Lancaster was paid a fair commission, as per the terms of its contract. It had an incentive to sell the aircraft at the highest possible selling price.

Lancaster Aviation has warehoused these assets in Florida and that is true. They are not owned by a convicted felon. They are owned by Air Spares Inc., a company in Florida. The member should know that the assets are in Florida because that is where the market is. Lancaster Aviation is using a facility in Florida strictly for warehouse purposes. It remains solely responsible for the marketing and sale of those assets.

Adjournment Debate

The assets are not in danger. They are the property of DND. They are only in the custody of that contractor. No parties other than the crown have any right to those assets.

With those facts, clearly the member has presented to the House a set of erroneous statements and facts, which he should know better.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 7.17 p.m.)

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