

LEGISLATURE OF ONTARIO

Monday, September 27, 1982

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers.

MEMBER'S APOLOGY

Mr. Gillies: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker: I might have wished that the member for Downsview (Mr. Di Santo) were in his seat for this point of privilege, but I do not see him here. I will proceed anyway.

Last Thursday, during question period, I made a remark here in my seat for which I cannot correct the record because it did not make the record. None the less, for this interjection I feel I owe both an apology to the member for Downsview, and an explanation to the House. I did speak privately to the honourable member on Friday and I think everything is fine between us. None the less, an explanation is due.

The remark I made, which as I recall as "Translation required" or "Translation needed", something of that sort, was made at the time the honourable member was retelling an anecdote about election promises.

I want to make two things clear to the House on this point. The intent of my remark was certainly not, in any way, a slur. It was more in the vein of, "What is the honourable member talking about?" rather than "What is he saying?" I want to make that very clear.

The other point is it has been recorded in certain of the media that my interjection was made at a time when the honourable member was asking a question of some import to the injured workers of the province. This is completely untrue. I want to make it very clear that my interjection came at the time he was telling his anecdote at the beginning of the question, and not at the time he was addressing a question of such importance to the injured workers of the province.

Despite all this, the important part is that no matter what the intent, the levity or gravity of my remark, I fear that I may have caused injury or insult to the honourable member. It was the last thing on my mind. He is a man I hold in the very highest regard and to him I offer my most sincere and abject apology.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

Mr. Speaker: Before carrying on with routine proceedings, I would ask all members to join with me in recognizing the following legislative pages:

Cheri Bradish, Middlesex; Alyssa Clark, Carleton-Grenville; Dominic Dowd, St. David; David Dowe, Brampton; Sam Gauvreau, Sudbury; Sandra Glista, Mississauga South; David Hunt, Brock; Nicole Laframboise, Beaches-Woodbine; Sharon Leighton, Scarborough Centre; Alex MacFarlane, Lincoln; David McLaughlin, Hastings-Peterborough; Steven Mock, Algoma; Tracy Ryan, Essex South; Christine Schiller, Wentworth North; Marisa Sterling, York Mills; Sheri Varley, Huron-Middlesex; James Verner, Kingston and the Islands; Paul Visser, Durham West; Emma Waverman, St. Andrew-St. Patrick; Dianne Zdybal, High Park-Swansea; Mark Zwegers, Kitchener.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY

NIAGARA RIVER POLLUTION

Hon. Mr. Norton: Mr. Speaker, as the honourable members are probably aware, negotiations are now under way between the United States Environmental Protection Agency and Hooker Chemicals and Plastics Corp. concerning the control and cleanup of certain chemical wastes deposited by the company in sites in the Niagara Falls, New York, area. This is one of the contaminant source areas being studied by the Niagara River improvement team that was set up in the ministry in November 1981.

I said then that we would not hesitate to intervene in the US proceedings when this action would contribute to the cleanup of the Niagara River. I have instructed my ministry's legal staff to prepare a submission to the United States district court in western New York requesting intervener status in the negotiation concerning one of these sites, which is presently under way. We expect the submission to be filed with the court that is presiding over the negotiation within about two weeks.

Our major concern at this time is the S area site adjacent to the company's plant in Niagara

Falls, New York, about 200 yards from the Niagara River. Intervener status is necessary for us to gain access to all of the information on the S area site, including confidential information, so we can evaluate fully the effectiveness of any proposed corrective measures.

The waste products from the manufacture of more than 250 chemicals were dumped in this site between 1947 and 1975. We estimate that a total of more than 70,000 tons of wastes have been placed in this and the adjacent N area sites, including wastes from the production of caustic soda, chlorine, chlorotoluenes, Mirex and halogenated organic chemicals, among other products.

The consulting firm of Geologic Testing Consultants in Ottawa, retained by our Niagara River improvement team, has completed a hydrogeologic report on the Hooker S area, which we are sending to Environment Canada, the EPA and New York state, and which I would like to table in the House today.

The report draws these conclusions:

First, the ground water in the fill area used to reclaim sections of land from the Niagara River and the sediments immediately below that fill are heavily contaminated with organic chemicals originating at the S area site.

Second, the ground water flow direction in this upper layer of the fill is primarily southerly towards the Niagara River. There is also a downward flow of water into the underlying Lockport dolomite or limestone.

Third, the upper 10 to 15 feet of Lockport dolomite contain relatively high concentrations of organic contaminants as well. The ground water in this rock layer moves initially north and then turns westerly to the Niagara gorge downstream of the falls.

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Fourth, there is a reasonable potential for some of the organic contaminants to move south towards and beneath the Niagara River, in the direction of the Canadian side.

As you can see, we regard the situation in S area as serious. Contaminants from the site have entered the ground water and have access to the river.

Our intention, as an intervener in these negotiations, is to make sure that the concerns identified in this study, and in our other monitoring activities, are resolved in any agreement developed for remedial action on the site.

I would add that our participation as an intervener at this stage would not, if the agreement does not meet our requirements, preclude our further involvement should the matter end

up before the courts in the further part of this process.

I will keep the honourable members of the House advised about our continuing activities both on the S area site as well as others relating to the clean up of the Niagara River.

I would add that there are copies available for members, such as the critics, the opposition leaders and other interested parties if they would like to notify us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WAGE AND PRICE RESTRAINT PROGRAM

Mr. Peterson: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. The minister sent a letter to his cabinet colleagues with respect to the criteria for his program, saying: "The cabinet committee has access to an independent review by the new Inflation Restraint Board. However, our intention is to minimize the administrative costs of this program and to use the excellence of the existing regulatory process to apply the relevant criteria in the first instance." Could the minister please clarify that and tell me the answer to this question: is the minister asking his fellow ministers to request the agencies under their control to comply with the guidelines, or is he saying they should be ordered to comply? What are the rules?

Hon. Mr. Elgie: Mr. Speaker, I would hope it was clear that what we are saying to each minister is that all prices that come within his control or supervision are to come within those guidelines. On the particular reference that the member made: for example, if I was to refer to the Minister of Energy (Mr. Welch)—and I hesitate to refer to him because he is such a lovely young man—but if I was to refer to him and to his ministry that he runs with such dedication and capability—

Mr. Swart: You ought to watch that colleague of yours.

Hon. Mr. Elgie: You agree with that, do you? Then I would say, and take this as an example, the Ontario Energy Board reviews the details of gas applications in great detail. I am simply telling him that process is to continue. The Ontario Energy Board is to continue examining the details and putting it to the close, careful scrutiny that they usually do. Following that careful scrutiny, if the Minister of Energy is not satisfied that it comes within the guidelines, he is to refer it to the cabinet committee. Then that