

Mr. Kerrio: It has nothing to do with saving a buck—nothing.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Hon. F. S. Miller: I want to tell him, there are very few corporate places that do not have to do that kind of fast move on a daily basis.

Mr. Kerrio: That's why we've got a \$2.7-billion deficit.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rae: Can the Treasurer confirm that the 5,000 units he is so quick to take credit for on page 13 of his budget with respect to rental accommodation would restore building levels to 1981 levels, which would mean there would still be half as many as were started in the late 1970s, in 1977 and 1978 as typical years? This would still be half the level with respect to rental accommodation in Ontario.

Given the proof of requests and pressures over the past year, not only from the co-operative movement but also from many municipalities that have nonprofit housing corporations, as well as the immense pressure on the Ontario Housing Corp. and all the other public housing corporations with respect to waiting lists in this province, how can the Treasurer justify the absence of a specific program with respect to social housing?

Does the Treasurer not recognize this absence means there are going to be thousands of people in this province who will be more poorly housed than they could have been if he had taken action?

Hon. F. S. Miller: I am sure that my colleague, given his way, would never have a privately owned home or apartment in the province; it would all have to be social, nonprofit or co-operative. It happens that the great bulk of the housing in this province is made by people who buy their own homes, rent their own apartments or build their own business.

Mr. Rae: That kind of theology is going to come as no help to those people who are looking for a decent place to live in this province, and the minister clearly does not give a damn about those people.

NIAGARA RIVER POLLUTION

Mr. Rae: Mr. Speaker, I have a question of the Minister of the Environment. Can the minister confirm that eight of the 12 major industries discharging on the Canadian side of the Niagara River or of its tributaries are not currently meeting the Ministry of the Environment's objectives for discharge into natural

watercourses? Can he confirm that information with respect to two thirds of the companies on the Canadian side? If so, how does the minister feel about the major cutbacks which the Treasurer has imposed on his ministry with respect to capital investment?

I have an additional question. How does he—

The Acting Speaker: One question. The honourable member is going on.

Mr. Rae: All right. I will let it go at that.

Hon. Mr. Norton: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for the honourable member to understand what this is in reference to. It is correct that, given the stringency of our control orders, there are several companies on the Canadian side—I believe the correct number is seven—where the suspended solids in the discharge at the moment are not meeting the requirements of the ministry. However, the companies, with the advice and supervision of our staff, are in the process of modifying their processes to achieve the standards we have established.

I think it is important for the member, in communicating with the public, to make a very clear distinction between suspended solids and the biological oxygen demand and, most important, the chemical contaminants that may exist in the discharges. The suspended solids are something very different. He ought to make that distinction so as not to mislead any people on either the Canadian or the American side of the border. We are talking about something very different from the threat that exists from discharges on the American side.

10:40 a.m.

With respect to the question of the budgetary allocations, I can assure the member that for the work we are doing in the Niagara River area there has been a substantial increase within our budget allocated towards that priority. The reductions that are reflected in the overall budgetary allocations and are part of the overall program of restraint within the government have been very carefully examined by me and by my staff in the course of the development of this year's budget. I can assure the member they are not in any way going to impact negatively upon the work we are doing.

It has obviously required some very careful examination of our priorities, but the reductions will be primarily in those areas of directly constructed and operated ministry facilities; that is, for water and sewage treatment. They will not impact on the areas of municipally constructed and operated facilities, whose fund-

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ing we will continue, as we have in the past, to participate in. We will be able to meet, if my recollection is correct, all the requests for such facilities that are currently before us this fiscal year.

Mr. Rae: Can the minister confirm that while there are objectives of his ministry with respect to biochemical oxygen demand and phosphorus and suspended solids, as he has mentioned, there are as yet no objectives from his ministry for hundreds of industrial organic chemicals, such as trichloroethylene or methylene chloride? Does the minister not feel that the absence of these clear objectives in Canada and in Ontario acts as a deterrent when we in Ontario are making representations to New York state and to the American authorities with respect to chemical discharges on the American side?

Hon. Mr. Norton: I can confirm the first part of the member's question. Yes, there are and I am sure will continue to be for some time into the future, not only in this jurisdiction but also within any industrial jurisdiction, some chemicals for which we do not yet have agreed standards.

Mr. R. F. Johnston: Some?

Hon. Mr. Norton: Certainly, some. I am not pretending that is not the case, nor would the honourable member find any other responsible individual in any other jurisdiction pretending that is not the case. However, our ministry has embarked on a major effort to establish standards and to review existing standards as they relate to chemicals in our environment. I will be announcing shortly the composition of an environmental standards advisory body which will allow, as I indicated on an earlier occasion, an opportunity for public input. In the process I hope to establish public confidence in the standards we do have and will be establishing.

The Acting Speaker: I thank the minister. I think you have answered the question.

Hon. Mr. Norton: Are you sure you do not want to hear more? It is a very interesting area, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: There is only an hour for question period.

Hon. Mr. Norton: That was just the introduction. I am sure the leader of the third party would be delighted to hear in detail about each of the standards we already have in place.

Mr. Kerrio: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the leader of the New Democratic Party is joining forces with us to fight the problems on

the Niagara River. I welcome anybody who is willing to help us in that fight.

Considering all the evidence that has been put before the minister on some of the plants discharging from the Canadian side, and more particularly those discharging from the US side, I wonder whether he would consider something I am putting in the form of a resolution, which would put a pilot plant in the city of Niagara Falls, which takes its water from the Niagara River.

Realizing the time is getting nearer when those toxics and contaminants might reach levels that are dangerous, will he consider Ontario's doing something meaningful to upgrade the research and development of a pilot plant at Niagara Falls to find out how we can best cope with the toxics in that major waterway? Would it not be in the best interests of all people across Ontario and in other jurisdictions to do that kind of research at Niagara Falls? There will be 100 per cent support from this side.

Hon. Mr. Norton: Mr. Speaker, the only incredible part of that question was the last sentence, that I would ever get 100 per cent support from that side on anything.

The Acting Speaker: The minister will answer the question.

Hon. Mr. Norton: The honourable member himself should bear in mind and constantly remind his constituents of the vigilance, testing and monitoring we are doing in the Niagara River to ensure there is no threat to the health of his constituents or any other persons depending upon that as their source of drinking water.

With regard to a pilot project, I sometimes wonder whether the member does not have a pipeline into my ministry. In fact, one of the things that—

The Acting Speaker: The minister should give us the answer to the question. He is getting diverted to a pipeline.

Hon. Mr. Norton: Or worse still, a mole. At the moment, we are looking at a proposal developed by the staff at my request for the possible development of such a pilot project. As I told the member earlier, we already have in place a system for treatment of water in another location in Ontario dealing with a situation we know is emergent.

The site of any such pilot project, if we do decide to proceed with it, has yet to be determined. Obviously, Niagara Falls and any other community in Ontario that might be faced with

similar potential problems would be given consideration as a possible location.

Mr. Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the minister of environmental baffle-gab. I am sure the minister would not want unintentionally to misinform the people of Ontario by leaving the implication that there are no toxic chemicals involved in those discharges by the companies we are talking about, because there are some.

Can the minister tell us, first, in the case of the two companies currently under control orders, which have been extended on a number of occasions, is he going to prosecute those companies if they have not met the conditions in the control orders when they expire? Second, can he tell us when he will proceed to put in place control orders on the other five companies where there has been little or no improvement and, to this point, he has taken no action at all?

Hon. Mr. Norton: Mr. Speaker, I did not at any time suggest that in the discharges there was not material present in sufficient concentration to be cause for concern. The question was raised with me as to whether they were meeting the requirements. The honourable member should not put words into my mouth.

By the way, it is not baffle-gab; it is just information. I know the member does not ask questions with the hope of eliciting information; he asks questions with the hope of embarrassing somebody on this side.

The Acting Speaker: I thank the honourable minister.

Hon. Mr. Norton: If he continues to ask me questions, I am going to continue to give him information whether he likes it or not.

TREASURER'S WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Mr. Davis: Mr. Speaker, on a point of personal privilege, if the honourable members will allow: My privileges as a member of the House were modestly abused over the past few days in terms of a report appearing in the press that the Treasurer (Mr. F. S. Miller) was celebrating his wedding anniversary last Thursday evening.

I would like to set the record straight so my privileges would then be in order by extending on behalf of all members of the House our congratulations to the Treasurer, who is on this date celebrating his 33rd wedding anniversary and who tomorrow will be celebrating the 33rd anniversary of his 23rd year of being born. In

other words, he will be 56 years old tomorrow. I would like to extend our congratulations to him.

The Acting Speaker: We all congratulate the Treasurer.

10:40 a.m.

OHIP PREMIUMS

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I have a new question for the birthday boy.

Hon. Mr. Ashe: It's tomorrow.

Ms. Copps: Just a boy; that is it. I am surprised he has survived as long as he has around this place. It says a lot for the Treasurer.

That being said, is the Treasurer aware that as a result of his refusal in the last two budgets to increase the rate of Ontario health insurance plan premium assistance levels, more than 2,000 families in Ontario who were eligible for premium assistance in 1981 are no longer eligible? Does he feel this is a just measure in view of the five per cent personal income tax surcharge?

Hon. F. S. Miller: Mr. Speaker, since the honourable member called me a birthday boy, let me just say, a Miller by any other name is just as sweet.

The Acting Speaker: Please answer the question.

Hon. F. S. Miller: Each year we continue to review the limits for assistance for OHIP, and I suggest they are succeeding in one way that is important. Apparently a greater number of people are taking advantage of the exemptions as they exist today. We looked at them again this year and we felt they were still relevant and fair. I suggest that has to be done each year as long as we have full to partial exemptions on OHIP premiums available.

Ms. Copps: With respect, the reason more people are taking advantage of the exemptions is that finally the government is beginning to let people know they are available. Certainly we are happy that people know they are available, but when a family with a 1981 income of between \$9,779 and \$10,630 is no longer eligible for premium assistance, it would seem to me that the Treasurer should have used his very extensive clout in cabinet—

The Acting Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Copps: The supplementary is coming. Why did the Treasurer not use his extensive clout in cabinet to bring the doctors in under the legislation in the spirit of the wage restraint legislation? He would have had \$82 million

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