

TIMEWELL ROAD WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT, ALBANY, NITROGEN LEVELS

2670. Hon. M.G. House to the Minister representing the Minister for Government Enterprises

- (1) With regard to the Water Corporation's plan to raise nitrogen levels in irrigation on its tree farm at the Timewell Road Waste Water Treatment Plant near Albany, will the Parliamentary Secretary table the advice that indicates the tree farm can safely absorb this higher level of nitrogen?
- (2) Will the Parliamentary Secretary show a graph that clearly shows how much higher the nitrogen levels will rise in comparison to the currently approved levels?
- (3) Will the Parliamentary Secretary provide details about how this raised level of nitrogen will not have a negative environmental impact on the land and water systems neighbouring the Timewell Road Treatment Plant?

Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:

- (1) There is no scientific basis for limiting the current level of nitrogen input to the Albany Effluent Irrigation Tree Farm. Research over four years has shown increasing the nitrogen load from its current level will have no significant impact on groundwater quality. The Water Corporation has worked closely with the Department of Environment in establishing the increased level of nitrogen loading. The operation of the Albany Tree Farm by the Corporation has always been conducted with close attention to detailed sampling and monitoring programs. The Corporation is committed to the principles of sustainable environmental management, and the Albany Tree Farm is an example of implementation of these principles.
- (2) No graph is available, however, the current nitrogen limits are at 106 kilograms per hectare. The Corporation anticipates there will be a rise in the short term to 120 kilograms per hectare prior to the upgrade of the Timewell Road Wastewater Treatment Plant. The upgrade will provide a substantial reduction of nitrogen loading, and allow for future town growth.
- (3) The Corporation has a detailed understanding of the dynamics of the woodlot site gained from extensive research and monitoring and is using best practices in operating the plantation. Research over four years has shown increasing the nitrogen level will have no significant impact on groundwater quality. The Corporation is seeking to apply nitrogen at an application rate that is both conservative, as well as consistent with its other woodlots around the State. The Albany Tree Farm has been independently shown to contribute only 0.6% of nutrients to the downstream catchment (Lake Powell) and is therefore not a significant nutrient contributor to that catchment. Detailed sampling and monitoring programs are in place and will continue to be conducted.