

*Environmental Affairs*

necessary to rely more often on the results of toxicological research conducted in other countries.

In this context, Canada supports the OECD's efforts to harmonize the various countries chemical regulatory programs. It supports also its objective of reciprocal acceptability of toxicological data between various trading partners.

We also refer more frequently to the criteria description emanating from international organizations such as the International Program for the Safety of Chemical Substances, a joint program of the World Health Organization, the United Nations Environmental Program, the International Labour Organization, and the International Cancer Research Centre.

As for the Hon. Member's second recommendation dealing with the toxic wastes in the Niagara River, the pollution of this river from individual, industrial and municipal discharge of pollutants and by from nearby the drainage into the river of toxic wastes dumpsites, is a source of major concern. The Hon. Tom McMillan, the Minister of Environment, could say a lot more to the House about this.

The Department of National Health and Welfare is mainly preoccupied with the possible contamination of drinking water as well as fish which could be eaten by the population.

There are 29 individual sources of industrial and municipal waste on the American side of the Niagara River, and 61 major toxic waste dumpsites on that side of the river, within a three-mile wide stretch of land along the river. Individual sources identified in the United States are responsible for 89 per cent of the total pollution load, estimated at 1,400 kilograms per day.

An important responsibility for evaluating the quality of the water in the Great Lakes and to determine the impact of that water on human health lies with the Great Lakes regional office of the International Joint Commission and its committees responsible for scientific matters and water quality, as well as various standing committees and study groups. Under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, officials from National Health and Welfare Canada sit on those committees and advise the International Joint Commission on the potential health hazard due to from chemicals in the Great Lakes basin.

The Government of Canada is attempting to reach agreements with other countries, including the United States, in order to reduce the discharge of potentially harmful chemicals or to clean up pollution sources. Most synthetic organic chemicals found in the Niagara River, and consequently in Lake Ontario and even the St. Lawrence River come from former dumps in the State of New York. We want to make sure that this federal Government, through meetings with the Governments of the United States and the State of New York, and through our embassy in Washington, the International Joint Commission and the joint Canada—U-S Committee on Toxic Chemicals in the Niagara River, will urge the United States and the State of New York to help Canada keep the Niagara River clean.

In a way, our concerns are shared by the American officials. In the State of New York, there is a licencing program for pollution control and waste disposal systems. That program is based either on U.S. national technological standards or on mandatory State standards on the quality of water, whichever are more stringent. In October 1984, American officials on the Committee on Toxic Chemicals in the Niagara River agreed on the need for binational management of toxic discharges into the Lake Ontario basin, but they also expressed the view that a first step would be to review the whole matter of the sources of toxic matters which are discharged in Lake Ontario.

The 1978 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement assigns numerical values to selected contaminants which persist in the environment. The program of the State of New York to control limited sources on the American side of the border has now been implemented and licencing systems are now in effect or about to come into effect. Evaluation of this program shows that, when the authorized final limits are reached, dumpings of contaminants in the river will be reduced.

The action taken until now to clean up the Niagara River has resulted in a major and certified decrease of certain persistent chemicals which flow into Lake Ontario from the river, compared with the record high load of pollutants reached between the mid-sixties and early seventies. Based on existing control programs, it is expected that the dumping of residual toxic products in the river will continue to decrease. The long-term monitoring program which has been recommended will enable us to determine whether this in fact happens, and it will be used as a starting point to consider possible changes to our monitoring strategies.

Major corrective action has already been taken, especially on the Love Canal location, to prevent the migration of dangerous waste material by infiltration. The Government is determined to sign agreements and to cooperate with the United States to reduce pollution in the Niagara River and Lake Ontario.

As for the improvement of sewage treatment facilities, the Hon. Tom McMillan, Minister of the Environment, plays a major role at the federal level. However, this activity comes mostly under the jurisdiction of the provinces.

And I can tell you that in Quebec the Government pays for 90 per cent of all municipal water purification projects and the municipalities pay only the remaining 10 per cent.

With respect to raising the profile of toxic chemicals in all areas of health research and of the preventive decision-making process, the Department of National Health and Welfare has established programs designed to keep the Canadian public informed about the nature and extent of hazards inherent in exposure to toxic chemicals. Allow me to give a few examples of the main activities under this ongoing program.

First, the staff of the Health Protection Branch closely monitors the programs of—