

*Food and Drugs Act*

certain requirements for spelling out on the package, in both official languages, a list of ingredients in those foods that we buy off the shelf in food stores. That is not so with respect to restaurants.

I have much more to say on this subject because it is as important and one that I feel strongly about. I know my constituents feel very strongly about it, particularly those who suffer from problems of food sensitivity or other environmental food sensitivity. Having said that, I know there are others who are anxious to speak in relation to this legislation and I know that they, as I, want to urge passage of this legislation to ensure that we have some action for all the people who need it. I certainly commend the legislation to the House and when the time comes I know that you will support it very vigorously yourself, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. David Daubney (Ottawa West):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in the Private Members' debate this afternoon on Bill C-289.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, I would like to talk to you about Bill C-289, which requires Canadian restaurants to list, in either official language, the ingredients used in the food they serve their customers.

Highly complex, to be sure, and difficult to apply, such a law nevertheless satisfies Canadians' rights to be informed accurately and effectively about the nature of the food they eat in a restaurant. I refer more particularly here to the many Canadians with food allergies who cannot take any food without knowing what is in it.

But to get an overview of the problem, let us first try to put it in a larger context. This is not the first time that the question of food has arisen. Our laws and institutions already seek to ensure the protection, welfare and health of Canadians. The Food and Drugs Act, for which Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada is partly responsible, has prudently set a whole series of regulations with which all suppliers who sell their food products in stores, whether a corner grocery, specialty shops or major food chains, must comply.

Madam Speaker, the regulations that I am talking about here apply to any food product, foreign or Canadian. On the package must be shown information in both official languages concerning the nature of the product, its usual name, the name and address of the company responsible, the net quantity, the ingredients used, the last date for storage and how to keep the food.

Since Canadians regularly eat most of their meals at home, the measures of which I speak here give them reassuring protection. Also, many foods are prepared in large quantities with unchanging recipes, and this gives us a further assurance. This law, Madam Speaker, has already been in effect for many years and experience shows us that suppliers have in general learned to comply with it strictly.

But more and more Canadians are eating away from home, from children who eat in school cafeterias and the snack bars of community centres to patients served on a tray in their hospital room and Members of this House who often eat on the run as they go about their business.

And not only restaurants are involved in this matter, Madam Speaker. People also eat in hotels and on board planes and ships. They pick up all kinds of food from carts and vans in the street, from fast food outlets and from caterers.

• (1450)

[*English*]

In fact, in Canada there are 72,000 commercial establishments in which one can procure food, which sell hundreds and hundreds of meals every day composed of over a thousand ingredients.

[*Translation*]

How can we resolve this situation effectively without violating anyone's rights, Madam Speaker? Well, I believe that it must be done in an orderly way, with a concern for fairness for the whole community.

In the vast empire of fast food, the answer to dealing with the problem of allergic reactions would seem to be more straightforward. Why? Because in most cases, these enterprises have built their reputation on a limited, specific and uniform recipe, so much so that what you eat tomorrow at the Royal Burger in Montreal is what you ate last week at the Royal Burger in Vancouver. That is typical of the franchise system. We know that some of these huge enterprises have already drawn up a list of allergens and are preparing to deal with the situation on a regular basis.

The problem is more acute in conventional restaurants. In this case, we are dealing with establishments that are much smaller and with a kind of cooking that depends on the personality of the cook. The cook or chef makes up the menu according to the preferences of the customers, according to what is in season, or to meet special requests, and may change the menu or modify a recipe if he runs out of one of the ingredients he usually uses. His cooking basically depends on his creativity and inspiration, which forms the basis for his gastronomic and financial success.

We must be careful not to frustrate thousands of Canadian restaurateurs who would be hard pressed to provide a daily list of the ingredients they used that day, attached to the menu. In that case, their menu would become rigid, and every time they changed the menu they would have to publish comprehensible lists in French or English, when many seasonings have no equivalent in those languages?

But on the other hand, how can we respond to the complaints and apprehensions, which are justified, of thousands of other Canadians who have allergic reactions and, every time they go to a restaurant, run the risk of going home with an upset stomach or becoming very ill? So far, Madam Speaker,