

*Plant Breeders' Rights*

be slight. Certainly the benefits and the advantages as a result of this will certainly be multiplied many times over when we consider the long-term effects of this in terms of maintaining our competitive viability and in terms of our leading edge in plant research and plant development. We should remember that competition within the marketplace will serve as an instrument of keeping prices down as well. The legislation also has safeguards to prevent excessive royalty charges and unreasonable restrictions on the supply of a variety.

Existing varieties, as I said earlier, are not regulated by the legislation so that their prices will not be affected. Cereal crop farmers will have the option of using grain from their own bins should they find it more economical than buying new seed.

Finally, much has been said about the protection and exchange of germplasm. First, I would point out that in countries where plant breeders' rights already exist, plant breeders have continued germplasm exchanges.

Second, when a new variety is released, the breeder cannot prevent others from using it in their breeding programs. As always, federal plant breeders will continue to make the results of their research generally and fairly available through all the usual channels.

Third, there are world-wide exchanges of germplasm from each country's national collections, and Canadian scientists participate in these exchanges.

Finally, Agriculture Canada has made a significant commitment to the collection and preservation of germplasm of various crop species. The department maintains Plant Gene Resources of Canada and it has, over the last two years, provided new resources for this program.

Also, the Experimental Farm Stations Act will be amended to ensure that plant, animal and microbial germplasm is conserved.

In addition, I am pleased to announce that the Smithfield Experimental Farm in Ontario has been designated as the primary clonal germplasm repository for horticultural crops.

As well, the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources co-ordinates world collections of germplasm and Canada has been an active participant in this program.

In summary, germplasm must be preserved and all the proper mechanisms are in place to ensure that it will be. These are some of the concerns. We have considered them very carefully and we have dealt with them fairly. I hope that the members of the committee will deal with them in an open and objective way as well.

Let us look at some of the benefits. In the absence of such legislation, plant breeders have no protection for the varieties that they develop. With this legislation, private plant breeders can collect returns on their investments and for their efforts. In this respect, plant breeders' rights is simply a matter of fairness.

In the absence of such legislation, private sector plant breeding in general has not flourished. The work is time-consuming, requires patience, expensive, high risk and it really does not offer the private breeders much return. With this legislation, royalties will provide an incentive for more private sector involvement. As a result, we can expect more improved varieties to be available to Canadian producers.

In the absence of such legislation, some foreign plant breeders do not allow their varieties to be sold in Canada due to our lack of legal protection. With this legislation, our producers will have access to varieties that are currently withheld from Canada, including cereals, potatoes, peas, fruits and ornamentals.

In the absence of such legislation, most countries with plant breeders' rights will not grant rights on varieties developed by Canadian plant breeders. With this legislation, these rights will be extended so that our plant breeders can collect royalties when their varieties are sold abroad.

In this connection, Mr. Speaker, we know the efforts that have been placed on developing a greater degree of self-sufficiency in the cereal grain production in the Atlantic region. Many of the varieties that they could produce there are varieties that have been developed in Europe. Without this legislation, we do not have access to those varieties. We see this as but one example of how it can help a region of Canada that is trying to improve its agricultural production and its agricultural viability. With