we not talk about those opportunities that are out there in the future rather than argue about the past?

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, the motion being debated today and introduced by the Official Opposition reads:

> That this House recognize that Research and Development, and the resulting innovation, are the lifeblood of a successful economy and country and that Canada must increase its level of Research and Development in order to ensure economic growth in an increasingly competitive and technologically literate global community.

It reflects the commitment of this side of the House to research and development. It also reflects the importance to every Canadian of science and technology and how we look at it for our economic prosperity and the well-being of Canadians of the future depend on adequate research and development to prepare our country for the high tech era that is upon us.

I would first like to address briefly the need for a comprehensive national science policy. It has been obvious from the illogical actions of this government with regard to science and technology, including its cuts to funding for research and development, that it lacks a coherent plan of action in this area.

The failure of this government to develop a clear and comprehensive long-term science and technology policy has been a recurrent theme mentioned by several witnesses who have now appeared before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, Regional and Northern Development.

Because of the complexity of science and technology issues, because of the increasing importance of research and development to our economic ability to compete on a global scale, and because of the need for more money to be devoted to research and development at both the academic and industry levels, the need for a focused, well researched, sophisticated plan to guide government action in this area is vital. Yet, this government has failed to come up with such a plan, and this is evidence of the short-sighted, inefficient nature of this government.

How do we know that? One only need look at the record of this government. I would just like to cite some figures. Canada, compared to the United States, Germany, France, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Japan, ranks lowest in the number of technology intensive industries with a positive trade balance, lowest in the number of scientists and engineers in the labour force, lowest in international patents granted, lowest in industry funded research and development, and lowest in the gross research and development expenditures as a per cent of Gross Domestic Product. Canada cannot be proud if we allow ourselves to remain lowest in these areas.

My leader, earlier this morning when he spoke, spoke of the breach of commitment of this government. He also spoke of allowing our country to remain in the junior league. Instead of closing the gap between promises and action, this government has closed scientific laboratories. Instead of firing the enthusiasm of our scientists and engineers, this government has fired them from their jobs. Instead of allowing for education and training, this government has cut funding for post-secondary education. It is not a record that our country can be proud of.

I would like to speak of science and technology as a tool for regional development. As the member for Winnipeg North and from that great part of the country west of Ontario, it is often thought that in the high tech economy which is rapidly developing, only the large urban areas and centres have the necessary skilled labour, management and infrastructures to sustain growth. The rest of the country will be limited to playing minor roles such as providing raw materials or serving as consumer outlets to a few high tech production centres.

While it is true that activities such as genetic engineering, telecommunications and computer science will fare better in large urban centres, there are other good components that are more suited to small and medium sized centres located in the periphery.

We must make a concerted effort to understand the processes of technological change that are occurring because such change has an impact on the labour force, the growth of the outlying regions, and the urban system in our country.

In the last decade the agents of change that have had the most impact have been innovations in telecommunications and computer technologies.

Because some regions are unable to keep abreast of economic change, we have the problem of regional development. Outlying areas are becoming progressively more isolated in terms of information networks and are also becoming more dependent on central Canada. Measures must be taken to propel outlying areas into the