

Supply

I would like to emphasize once more that Dr. Smirnoff is a remarkable man who has made great strides in research and wonderful discoveries.

I can assure the Hon. Member that I keep myself well informed. I have visited the centre personally and I am aware that work is going on at Chute-à-Galets. I repeat that the research centre is still looking at non-chemical methods to reduce or eliminate the spruce budworm.

[*English*]

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I presume the Hon. Member said that I misinterpreted the remarks of her colleague and that I had not understood his remarks correctly. I did understand his remarks absolutely correctly. I know what he was saying. I can only deduce that he was referring to the Budget, and I am certain that I heard him correctly. However, in trying to solve that problem, it should not be blamed on the people who work in Quebec.

[*Translation*]

The people in Quebec are not responsible for the problem. The Government is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Cadieux): The Hon. Member for Louis-Hébert.

Mrs. Duplessis: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell something else to my colleague for Gander—Twillingate. One thing that he is forgetting is that the provincial Government is involved in all sectors of forestry research. There are agreements about this sector and a political will. The federal Government must respect the wishes of the provincial Government.

This is another factor to consider.

[*English*]

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, there is only one area for which the federal Government is responsible under the Constitution of Canada as it relates to forests, and that is research. The Hon. Member is absolutely correct in saying that the provincial Governments control the forests as such, but the federal Government has a responsibility for research, and that is what we are talking about here today. The only role the federal Government plays in the use of chemicals in forest areas is in approving the chemicals that the provincial Governments can use. That is the problem we have with this Government.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I would hope that this debate will be kept at a non-partisan discussion level as it proceeds. I would like to begin by stressing the importance of the crisis that faces us in the Great Lakes region. It is because of the significance of that crisis that this motion has been moved today by the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia). It is a part of his and our continuing efforts to make certain that public awareness increases and, as a result, Government action is taken.

● (1530)

I do not want to spend a lot of time on this matter because I have spoken about it before. However, I stress that the recent excellent report of the Royal Society of Canada assessing the 1978 agreement between Canada and the United States, to which the motion refers, came to some very sober conclusions. It concluded that the more difficult programs, such as controls on diffuse sources, remediation of contamination from landfill sites, development and implementation of measures to control in-place pollutants, and a more general comprehensive strategy to control atmospheric deposition of toxic substances, have been slow in advancing. In short, movement on the very heart of the problem has been least rapid, and the agreement before us paid little attention to it.

Perhaps that does not catch the imagination of people as does a study of the United States Environmental Protection Agency which was released this week. That study referred to dioxin contaminants in fish in the Great Lakes. It found that contrary to the information we have been receiving from the provincial Ministry of the Environment and from the federal Department of the Environment, over 41 parts per trillion of dioxin were found in a number of species of fish in different parts of the Great Lakes system. It showed that Lake Ontario had the highest dioxin level, with levels as high as 41 parts per trillion, as I just indicated.

That information tells us that people are eating fish with dioxin levels well above health standards. Also, it tells us that there is a potential for that dioxin to move further into the food chain and to be higher concentrated throughout the system, so as to make the entire situation significantly worse.

It is a crisis which has been marked not only by studies but by the emergence of local groups in areas throughout the Great Lakes Basin, partly in response to the basic conclusion of the study of the Royal Society of Canada that the Great Lakes Basin was the most polluted part of North America when it came to toxic substances. In Windsor there has been the formation of a group known as the Clean Water Alliance which met recently with the Minister when he visited that city. The Alliance put across very strongly the great public concern which exists in respect of the issue.

The sense of crisis comes not only from those of us in the Opposition, but from the federal Government itself, which issued a report card yesterday on its own performance. I would not say that the over-all report card was modest, but I think some of the marks are perhaps a little higher than I would give. However, in respect of toxic wastes, it was dead on. It said that the Government deserved an F or a failure in the control of toxic wastes. It made the point quite clearly that poor disposal practices were emerging as Canada's number one environmental problem. It also indicated that urgent actions were required to identify health risks, to set standards, and to implement control measures.

That is the reality which we in the Great Lakes Basin face. It is something which I do not think any Government,