

Quality of Water

Considering these new findings, the Department has acknowledged the need for revising the guidelines for drinking water quality in Canada; a new document, published in 1987, is now available upon request.

This edition of the guidelines includes 41 pesticides, 31 of which had not been considered previously. The guidelines include 15 new organic parameters, while we have re-evaluated 9 inorganic and organic substances, including an assessment of the need for setting guidelines for PCBs and dioxins, which have aroused the interest and concern of all Canadians.

The Department of National Health and Welfare intends to revise this document at regular intervals. As in the past, revision is always done in cooperation with the provincial governments and with their full participation under the auspices of the Federal-Provincial Advisory Committee on Environmental and Occupational Health. Given the importance of safe drinking water and the rapid advancement of knowledge, a standing sub-committee has been established so that we can continue to keep the recommendations up to date and to deal with other important issues related to the supply of drinking water.

Drafting guidelines is not the only thing the Department of National Health and Welfare is doing with regard to drinking water. A safe drinking water supply can only be assured with a much broader approach. Overall, the Department's long-term goals for drinking water are: to ensure that all Canadians are supplied with drinking water that satisfies the recommendations for drinking water quality in Canada; to ensure that commercially sold water treatment devices used at point of consumption are safe, this being established by laboratory tests and by actual use, so that potentially dangerous devices are taken off the market; also, to ensure that all chemicals and materials that come directly or indirectly into contact with drinking water when it is produced, distributed or stored are assessed for potential danger, in order to guarantee their safety.

In view of the concerns expressed about the quality of some drinking water, it seems that some Canadians have lost confidence in their municipal drinking water to the extent that they have turned to other sources of supply or feel obliged to further purify water for their own use. Annual sales of bottled water by the soft drink industry alone are estimated at around \$15 million. There is also

spring water and other kinds of water sold in containers—

I do not know whether you are aware, Mr. Speaker, that in my riding of Argenteuil—Papineau, mainly in the Mirabel region, we have the best drinking water in Québec, if not in Canada, and we have a drinking water bottling industry that creates many jobs.

I also think—you are indicating to me that my time is nearly up, Mr. Speaker—that the Government of which I am honoured to be a part has acted and will continue to act. Recently, the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Bouchard) said that he was about to prepare documents to improve our quality of life.

I know what the Hon. Member means, because lately I went out onto Lake Ontario myself. I was very surprised to learn that most homes on the shores of Lake Ontario have practically no pollution control equipment. On the other hand, I was told that the U.S. Department had been on the lookout for several years and that things were improving. But with respect to the Great Lakes and the Niagara Peninsula, you can be assured, Mr. Speaker, and I would like the Hon. Member for Beaches—Woodbine to know, that Government Members from that region are very vocal in our caucus to make us more aware of this most important matter.

Mr. Speaker, I would have liked to go on, I had taken some very important notes, but unfortunately, my time is up. I would like to assure you that the Minister of National Health and Welfare is following this issue with great interest and that of course we will act to protect the health of Canadians, so that we may always have good, safe drinking water in Canada and leave it as a heritage to our children.

[*English*]

Mr. Doug Fee (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, I cannot follow up on the bragging done by the Parliamentary Secretary about having the best drinking water in my province. Unfortunately, the water in my municipality suffers from a slight odour problem because it has too much hydrogen sulphide in it. Last weekend, I was visiting with the Mayor of the Town of Bowden who was very proud of the fact that an independent panel, which included the Minister of the Environment of the Province of Alberta, chose the water from Bowden, Alberta as being the absolute best in Alberta.