

Adjournment Debate

The government has recognized that our environment is under threat. Many species of Canadian plant and animal life are in danger. Our forests must be systematically replaced after cutting. Our farmlands must be guarded against overuse and misuse, as well as urban sprawl. Our lakes must be protected against acid rain. Our communities must have environmentally sound sewage facilities. The mountains of household waste we generate daily must be disposed of in a manner that causes minimal harm to our environment. Toxic substances must be contained, managed, and disposed of in a safe way.

The challenge is great here at home, but both our federal and provincial governments are rising to this challenge. They are developing a broad system of environmental legislation, regulations and policies.

I would like to move from the general to the specific with a few real examples and some thoughts on their implication. Fifteen million acres of productive land around the world are converted into worthless desert every year. In Canada alone we lose 26 acres of productive farmland every hour to urban sprawl. More than 27 million acres of forest land throughout the world are destroyed every year. In over three decades that is an area equivalent to Canada's entire land mass east of the Manitoba-Ontario border.

The implications are increasingly known. These forests are the lungs of the planet. They are the major regulators of oxygen balance in the atmosphere and exert an important control on global precipitation and moisture exchange. Both on land and in the oceans the largest and most complex species of plants and animals, the highest products of evolution, are facing extinction. The giant redwoods and sequoias of America, the Canadian grizzly bear and the whooping crane, the condor of the Andes, the elephant and the rhino, the blue whale, the giant panda of China, are all seriously threatened.

I have commented on the abuse of our land and water. I would like now to turn to the use of the air we need to breathe in order to live. In the words of the International Conference on the Changing Atmosphere, humanity is conducting an unintended, uncontrolled, global pervasive experiment whose ultimate consequences could be second only to a global nuclear war.

We of the so-called developed world like our mobile and air conditioned creature comforts. We burn gasoline and we use fertilizers and what we reap is carbon dioxide and methane. These accumulate in the atmosphere and trap solar energy reflected from the earth. The result is an increase in surface temperature. What you have heard is referred to as the "greenhouse effect".

Scientists predict an average global warming of about 4 degrees Fahrenheit within the next 45 years. That may not sound like much when local temperatures typically change 20 degrees from day to day, but a global change of 4 degrees within such a short time will alter precipitation patterns and vegetation zones throughout the world with potentially disastrous consequences in some regions.

Global warming will cause world sea levels to rise as the heated oceans expand and glaciers and ice caps melt. The rise in the next 45 years is expected to be about five feet. It will, for example, place permanently under water lands currently home to 25 million to 40 million people. Low-lying cities such as Charlottetown and Saint John could be inundated. Prince Edward Island could be divided into three or four islands and maybe eventually disappear under water.

Still, more ominous is the growing threat to stratospheric ozone, that thin blanket of gases around the earth that protects the human race and other life forms.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The period for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

• (1800)

[Translation]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.