particular interest in this subject because in my own riding of Broadview—Greenwood, in South Riverdale, there has been an enormous amount of exposure to lead from a company in the area. Indeed, right now, soil that has been lead contaminated is being removed.

The children in that area, of course, are exposed not only to the lead in the soil and the lead which comes into their homes by way of dust, but they can be getting it through lead in water pipes and through food. Of course, many of the older homes used lead paint. Children do touch things and put their hands in their mouths, and it is a cumulative effect.

We just cannot be reassured by this very complacent Government that everything is being done correctly or that, because lead in gasoline is gradually being reduced, the problem is being taken care of. It is not being taken care of because children are exposed in so very many different ways.

It may be that there is no safe level for exposure to lead, and children, of course, are particularly vulnerable. The supposedly safe level for lead of 25 micrograms per decilitre of blood was set in 1985. It is probably too high. I might note that in my riding, a very large number of children have been shown to be at risk at this very, very high level of exposure. Now we are beginning to get information which suggests that at levels typical for Canadian children of 10, 12 or 15 micrograms per decilitre of blood, there can be effects on learning, on stature, on birth weight and on hearing.

I note that in the southern part of my own riding, the average level for children is 15 micrograms. The average in urban Canada is 12 micrograms, and the average in Ontario, when considering rural and urban areas together, is 10 micrograms. We are not talking about just odd instances or children with abnormalities who have some tendency to put things in their mouths. We are talking about thousands of children who may be developmentally handicapped. They may go into adult life handicapped by exposure to lead in a variety of ways.

• (1730)

We know that the best way to attack this problem is to reduce and eliminate lead in gasoline and paint. Those are two convenient ways to begin to reduce the problem. Obviously it will be harder to get rid of lead in other forms, and we need a comprehensive approach. However, the proposal before us is certainly a most reasonable one. It is to reduce:

> —the allowable lead content in all consumer paints, particularly those used on products for children, from the existing level of 0.5 per cent to 0.6 per cent.

Where did these numbers come from? Interestingly enough his lower limit is the allowable limit in the U.S. right now. Here we have the irony of a country which has not been very good on environmental health matters with a better model than we have. The Government ought to be ashamed that we have Members of Parliament urging that an American standard be adopted in order to give Canadians better protection than they already have from their own Government. I hope it is ashamed and will consider doing just that.

Lead is still allowed in paint in Canada. The words "lead free" mean up to 5,000 parts per million, whereas in the U.S. it is down to 600. Yet Environment Canada has been very complacent about this. They take the view that, with respect to the reduction of lead in gasoline, the problem has been resolved. We have done enough and do not have to worry any more. That is certainly not the case at all.

The Hon. Member referred to the lead and gasoline problem and I want to refer to it as well because we need a comprehensive approach. We want to see progress in particular areas but we need to reduce lead emissions from gasoline as well. Studies show that 30 per cent to 40 per cent of lead in children's blood is directly attributable to lead in gasoline. The figure is probably higher on an indirect basis. Yet our standard of .2 grams per litre, which we went to this year, was adopted in the U.S. in 1982. We are behind the U.S., and yet the Government adopted an advertising approach reminding people of their duty as citizens to buy unleaded gasoline, this instead of appealing to their pocket-books in a very practical way by hiking taxes on leaded gasoline in order to encourage use of unleaded.

I note as well that the Department of National Defence uses leaded gasoline routinely. It is a major government Department with an enormous number of motor vehicles and it is contaminating the environment in which children have to grow up. The Department is causing a serious health hazard, and that is most reprehensible. The federal Government ought to change its policies. The taxpayers' money is being used in a way which is causing ill health and possible mental retardation among very young children.

Children are much more vulnerable than adults. They are shorter, more exposed to exhaust fumes, and in certain cities, and my own is a prime example with an enormous amount of traffic, they are particularly exposed. They have more soft tissue and the toxins concentrate in those tissues. We therefore have a responsibility to see that they have the protection they need so they will be able to develop properly and not be harmed by lead. Some 30 per cent of lead absorbed ends up in the brain or soft tissue where it interferes with the production of key proteins. That has an effect on nerve cells.

I simply want to conclude by pointing out that this is a problem of massive dimensions. Pollution Probe estimates that half of Canada's pre-school children are at risk as a result of these low levels of lead to which they are exposed. This is not good enough. We need tougher standards. We need comprehensive coverage including paints, toys, exterior and interior paints, and gasoline. This is a serious problem and I strongly endorse the resolution before us today. I urge the Government to take much speedier and stronger action to give health protection to our young children.