

absence of such standards or guidelines which has made it too easy for some to raise support on the basis of overstatement and misinformation, and to attempt to interfere with the free flow of international trade in forest products.

The task of responding to the various criticisms of European environmental groups lies with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which, in concert with the Canadian forestry service, the provinces, and industry, has addressed this particular issue by ensuring that embassy personnel throughout Europe monitor and report on local incidents and legislative proposals in this category, respond quickly and factually to any criticism, build partnerships with various interest groups, and strengthen dialogue with key institutions, academics, scientists and parliamentarians. Both incoming and outgoing missions have been organised to ensure that knowledgeable parties have the opportunity to view firsthand the realities of conditions in Canadian forests, and to discuss local forestry practice with stakeholders across Canada. In this way, the misinformation promulgated by some groups has been exposed, and this extensive effort by Canadians to communicate positive developments and achievements in Canadian forest practices and land-use policies has been welcomed by customers in Europe.

Canada is also concerned about the impact of the European Union's regulation on fur imports. The regulation, which was enacted in 1991, would ban fur imports as of January 1, 1996, if producers do not ban the use of jaw-type leghold traps for 13 species or enact humane trapping standards for those species.

The fur trade is one of Canada's oldest international industries. It contributes approximately \$600 million to the Canadian GDP. Over 90% of Canadian wild fur is exported. Europe has always been the principal market. Over 100,000 Canadians are employed in the industry. About half the 80,000 trappers are aboriginal Canadians for whom trapping is not only an important source of income, but an essential part of their heritage.

Canada was willing to cooperate with the European Union in the implementation of the regulation because we share the principles of sustainable use, animal welfare and the preservation and expansion of the fur industry. However, in late 1993, the European Commission issued a reinterpretation of the regulation that no fur-producing country could meet. Canada, and the other major producers, the USA and Russia, are working to persuade the EU to moderate the impact of the regulation.

The European Commission is supposed to decide by September 1, 1995, which countries will be able to continue to export to the European Union. Canada's position is that the best course of action remains in finding a

cooperative way to resolve our differences, in a way that fulfils our shared animal welfare goal and preserves the international fur trade. The Prime Minister raised the fur issue with Mr. Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission and other European union participants at the G-7 Summit in Halifax. Following the summit, the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, as the guest of the Prime Minister, visited the Northwest Territories. Chancellor Kohl heard first hand the potentially devastating impact that the fur regulation will have on northern and aboriginal communities. Members of the European parliament and the German bundestag have also recently visited Canada to learn about the impact of the fur regulation.

As a result of the discussions at the Whistler quadrilateral meeting and the G-7 Summit, the European Commission agreed to form a working group to resolve this issue. However, in spite of a number of initiatives on Canada's part, Canada, the USA and the EU have not yet agreed to even the basis for the formation of a working group to negotiate an agreement on humane trapping. While it is in everyone's interest to resolve this dispute through negotiations, if there are no positive developments soon, Canada will initiate the dispute settlement process under the rules of the World Trade Organization.

Canada's strategy on the fur issue is developed in consultation with the provinces, territories, industry and the leading aboriginal groups. The Canadian government is dedicated to the preservation of a legitimate trade.

THE ENVIRONMENT

FEDERAL MANAGEMENT OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE MATERIAL— REPORT OF AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA— GOVERNMENT POSITION

(Response to question raised by Hon. Janis Johnson on May 24, 1995)

Canada's approach has been to develop the concept for disposal of the nuclear fuel waste (high-level radioactive waste) deep within the rock of the Canadian Shield and to carry out an in-depth environmental assessment and public review to determine that it is safe and acceptable prior to implementation of disposal.

Assuming a favourable response by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Panel to move forward with implementation of disposal of nuclear fuel waste, disposal is not anticipated to begin before 2025-2030 because the identification of a suitable site, site characterization work, other related activities, as well as obtaining the required environmental and regulatory approvals, will take about 30 years. It is anticipated that future funding requirements for the disposal of the nuclear fuel waste will be provided for by the nuclear utilities.