

*Private Members' Business*

government does not seem to appreciate the seriousness of these concerns.

I thought I could discuss the dioxin and furans, the two toxic families of chemicals, but I will respect the time you have allotted me and conclude that the government should place much more emphasis on the health of Canadians. If it did, it would be more concerned about the potential ill effects of pesticides, hormones, antibiotics and dioxins and furans. There is a need for more testing to be done to determine what levels of the substances are harmful and a corresponding review of the regulations which control their use.

I support this motion. When we determine to do research, when we try to establish what potentially could harm the Canadian public, there can only be progress, and therefore, I support this motion. I would like to ensure the continuing safety of Canadians through research.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak to the motion presented by the Hon. Member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing (Mr. Axworthy). The motion before the House today deals with a very complex technology, namely the analysis of non-harmful food ingredients such as additives and pesticides, a field that is highly specialized. The aspects of this motion which concern food additives could be used to illustrate the degree of complexity involved. Actually, it would be preferable to separate the cumulative effects from the combined effects of food additives, simply because these are two entirely different matters.

The comprehensive toxicological assessment that food additives undergo before their use in Canada is approved will provide most of the information on the so-called cumulative effects of these products in the human body.

Food additives are no different from other chemical products that enter the body and are used by the body, and more specifically, the myriad of chemical products contained in food which include proteins, carbohydrates and fat. Some are transformed by normal bio-chemical reactions as a result of the body's metabolism and can help the body produce energy, while others, because of

their physical and chemical properties, may never be absorbed and remain basically unchanged after entering the body.

Others may be absorbed and subsequently eliminated.

Actually, the human body is a wonderfully effective machine that is constantly ingesting food, water and air and uses what it needs while getting rid of the rest in one way or another.

We can say that relatively few elements have a chance to accumulate in the body. Usually they are either used or eliminated. If food additives were to accumulate and if such accumulation were to have a toxic impact, this would be detected by the toxicological analyses that are standard for all food additives before they are approved for use.

If these studies showed signs of accumulation, a thorough assessment of the significance of these findings would be done before the additive could be approved for use in food.

To examine the somewhat more complex issue of the combined effects of food additives, we have to consider the thousands of chemical products to which the body is exposed when it ingests food.

If we add one or two food additives to this whole mixture of chemical products that naturally occur in food, we must not conclude that these additives will necessarily set off a toxic reaction.

In fact, the odds are there would be a much higher risk that some of the thousands of other chemicals products would react together. That is what happens in cooking, Mr. Speaker, when we prepare food.

In fact, it is difficult to predict all the reactions that can be generated by food ingredients, including additives.

However, just as when other food elements or additives or pesticides are involved, this issue is dealt with by chemists, nutritionists or professional toxicologists with the Department of National Health and Welfare, during the strict pre-approval process.

As you know, research in this area would not be particularly useful. Most of the food we eat is cooked, which brings about hundreds and thousands of changes.