

ful we must prevent chemicals from entering the environment in the first place. We must use foresight and common sense and structure all of our activities to prevent chemicals leaking into the environment. Based on a firm foundation of scientific knowledge and research we must anticipate and prevent problems rather than just continue to react.

What Canadians need and deserve, and I think what they are asking this Government for, is a comprehensive management approach for toxic chemicals, an approach that manages chemicals through their life cycle in a manner that prevents chemical leakage into the environment. This will mean that at any point in the life of a chemical, from start to finish—whether it is introduction into trade and commerce or manufacturing or transportation—during its use or disposal, all participants who use and care for that chemical must act in a responsible manner to protect the environment and the health of Canadians. We must find ways to manufacture chemicals in this country which are not subject to failure, such as I have already mentioned. We need more efficient manufacturing processes that produce less waste or, better yet, use the waste of one industry as a resource for the other.

We must recognize that things could go astray, and we must act quickly when they do. I think our workers, our communities and our environment deserve to be protected with every ability that we have to offer. When workers and consumers like ourselves use chemicals we must be equipped with the best information to use them properly, dispose of them safely, to act in emergency situations, and to choose alternative products and practices.

Chemicals, as all of us know, must be transported and stored in a manner that eliminates leakage to the environment. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski), for example, has been very active in the field of transportation of dangerous products, dangerous goods. It is his initiatives, his type of legislation and approach to put forward a plan that will reduce not only the risk, but will ensure as well that if accidents occur, as they have for example in rail accidents just recently, there has been a very quick response time and a very adequate response time. I think we all want to commend the Minister of Transport for taking that leadership. If accidents do happen clean-up must be fast and effective and victims must be compensated in a just and equitable fashion. Ministers are working at these problems and in fact finding solutions and putting forward proposals.

We must not forget disposal, both of the chemical itself after its useful life, and of waste. Waste cannot continue to be added to the environment in the naive hope that the environment can safely accommodate it and cleanse itself. There must be adequate destruction facilities operating in this country to dispose of hazardous waste.

The sheer number of chemicals we use is intimidating. Over 65,000 are now produced commercially on the global market with over 1,000 new ones being added every year. Only a small fraction have been tested for their environmental and health consequences. We must clearly define the ground rules for allowing a chemical to enter the Canadian market. Since we

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are part of the global chemical market we are promoting the adoption and utilization of common international approaches to evaluating chemicals and setting those needed standards.

We must also promote alternatives to the use of high risk chemicals. Canada alone cannot test all the chemicals we use in a reasonable time frame. I can say that is also the case, for instance, in my own Department, especially in the Health Protection Branch. We have highly motivated people, but I think one has to also be reasonable in terms of the testing approach and the resources that are available. It has to be an international effort. It is one we are committed to put in place, and we are working through the OACD to do just that.

There is a crisis of public confidence in this country when it comes to chemical management. Our ability to solve the problems have not kept pace with our ability to detect the problems. The public is deeply concerned about the fragmented approach to dealing with chemicals, and our laws do not meet these public expectations. Most of our laws are the products of dealing with the problems of the past decades. They are inadequate to deal with the problems of today. Therefore, they must be revamped, they must be streamlined, consolidated, and they must address the real problems of environmental protection. I think that for all of us the challenge is clear.

The Minister of the Environment has already stated his intention of implementing a comprehensive solution to the problem. This package will include an environmental policy statement outlining the rights of each Canadian to a clean and healthy environment. It will streamline and strengthen existing federal environmental legislation, which will be more responsive to current environmental problems and provide for appropriate safeguards for all Canadians. It will address the need for more research into the effects of toxic chemicals. It will include a stronger legislative framework for regulating toxic chemicals to clean up problems that already exist and preventing new ones. It will include information to the public on living with chemicals, and it will define a cradle to grave management package for chemicals in Canada.

The key feature of the plan will be a new Environmental Contaminants Act, and consultations are already underway to ensure that use of all sectors of our society are involved in defining the problems of environmental contamination from chemicals, and are equally involved in proposing and implementing appropriate solutions.

The new Environmental Contaminants Act will provide this Government with stronger powers and shift the onus to industry to prove that their products are not harmful to humans or to the environment. It will require that all chemicals are subject to a review process prior to their entry to the Canadian market to ensure that no danger to health or the environment exists.

As a Government, Mr. Speaker, we are fully committed to addressing a wide range of interests and concerns about chemicals that exist in the country. Other Governments, industry, labour, consumer and environmental interest groups are already working with us on this key initiative. Ultimately our