

Private Members' Business

to electro-magnetic fields emitted from electrical sources inside and outside the home.

You see that the focus of this study was not just high voltage lines but electricity in general. It must be noted, Mr. Speaker, that this study found a slight risk for cancer, particularly leukaemia.

In conclusion, the evidence of increased risk for cancer, particularly leukaemia, is slight, but it cannot be eliminated entirely. Any risk for leukaemia would be slight. But people's exposure to electro-magnetic fields is significant because we must include not only high voltage lines but also all the other electrical appliances that surround us everywhere all the time. What are the implications of all this for health?

Mr. Speaker, we are now at the stage of evaluating what must be done to shed more light on this problem.

The Department of National Health and Welfare has been studying this question for several years and a laboratory study on mice exposed to electro-magnetic fields has already been developed and is nearly complete. This study involves a research hypothesis specifically related to tumours allegedly induced by electro-magnetic fields. As well, we are in direct contact with various international researchers who also work in this field.

The department has set up a task force—it includes spokesmen from government, labour unions, hydro power companies and universities—to organize future research in this field. The task force's findings confirm the importance of closer department monitoring and the need for new research projects. The final report will be out shortly.

Two other major studies are now under way in Canada. The first has to do with the health of workers likely to be affected and it is funded by Ontario Hydro, Hydro-Quebec and Électricité de France. This project focuses on the use of a dosimetre which was developed in Quebec recently to give accurate readings on the degree of exposure of people working in such fields.

The other, sponsored by Ontario Hydro, Hydro-Quebec and the department, involves research on leukaemia hazards in mice constantly exposed to magnetic fields. Researchers in this on-going study will use exposures of varying intensity to determine whether the effect, that is incidence of leukaemia in mice, spreads as the intensity increases.

The project will cost in excess of \$1 million, including a \$400,000 contribution from the department's research and development program.

This study will be under the independent supervision of a research director chosen from the academic field. Both projects are very important even though the results of the studies will not be available before three years. We are quite confident that they will make a significant contribution to the scientific lore on this issue.

For a number of years now medical scientists have acknowledged that electro-magnetic fields have beneficial effects in the treatment of non-self-curing bone fractures.

• (1800)

Research is going on to assess the effect of those fields in preventing osteoporosis, and in healing wounds and nerves.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that in the department's views, research on the effects of the electro-magnetic fields on humans is important and relevant. We will be using improved and innovative research methods, Mr. Speaker, and take co-operative actions both nationally and internationally. For at least two years the government has been supporting those essential projects carried out by the industry. We have made a significant contribution to research in this area by increasing our links with universities and utilities.

I believe my time is up, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the concern of the hon. member for Davenport regarding high voltage power lines and the effect that their electro-magnetic fields may have on human and animal health.

This is a controversial issue and one that is of growing concern to Canadians and, therefore, to this government. I want to assure the hon. member and this House that no issue is of greater importance than the health of Canadians. This controversy was heightened by an article published a few months ago in the *New Yorker* magazine. In that article there are several serious claims about electro-magnetic fields and what they may mean to human and animal health.

Since then, the author's claims have been subject to much debate. While this is a relatively new area of concern, I would like to take this opportunity to inform