

*Routine Proceedings*

In making today's announcement, the government is making public complete details of the policy and a document describing the scientific basis and the technical criteria of the policy.

[English]

In making today's announcement, the government is making public complete details of the policy and the document describing the scientific basis and technical criteria of the policy. The government is also publishing a third document summarizing the main issues identified in eight months of public consultations and our response to those issues.

The policy covers the complete range of toxic substances that are used or released into the environment as a result of our modern lifestyle. PCBs, dioxins, furans would not have been accepted had we known their effect on human health and on the food chain. This policy will mean that new industrial chemicals, new pesticides, new compounds produced by biotechnology, and new chemicals that mimic human hormones will be banned unless they can satisfy rigorous scientific criteria. The onus will not be on Canadians to prove that these products pose a danger. The onus will be on the manufacturer to show that they are safe and can be properly managed.

The bottom line is that a decision to ban new chemicals and new products will be made on science. For existing toxic substances that continue to pose a risk the decision to eliminate the products from the environment will also be based on science. We will establish targets and schedules that will take into account social, economic, and technical considerations.

During public consultations some have made the point that they should have the opportunity to produce additional scientific evidence once a preliminary decision to virtually eliminate or to stop the production of a product is made. The government will provide that opportunity, but we will provide the same opportunity to scientific experts, to other governments, and to the public. For human made toxic substances that are not persistent and do not bioaccumulate, do not stay in the environment for a long time, actions to control them will take into account risk management and legal, economic, and sociological factors.

[Translation]

In simplest terms, the worst offending toxics will be gone, all other toxics will be managed throughout their entire life-cycle.

[English]

In English we say cradle to grave management.

[Translation]

There are those who may complain that this is too tough a policy. Tell that to people who live along dead lakes and rivers, with deformed fish and birds. Tell that to Canadians who breathe our country's air, till our country's soil and swim in our country's waters.

[English]

I want to be clear that these actions apply to areas under federal control. Many toxic substance problems in Canada fall under the jurisdiction of the provinces and the territories; hence my response earlier in question period on the issue of contaminated sites. It is the federal government's intention to use the policy we are announcing today in order to pursue a national strategy for managing toxic substances through discussions with the provinces and the territories.

I think here is one example where a PCB in Quebec, a PCB in Ontario, and a PCB in British Columbia pose the same problem for Canadians.

[Translation]

I do not approach this matter with a "holier than thou" attitude.

•(1215)

The federal government's hands have not always been clean in the past nor has the federal government made a determined effort to be a world leader in controlling toxic substances.

My belief is, however, that it is in the absolute interest of Canadians to work together to eliminate and control toxics, and, more importantly, because this is what Canadians want.

[English]

We need a united Canadian strategy for dealing with the world community. The free flow of air and water means that dangerous substances released in one community can end up poisoning the environment of another community a thousand kilometres away. That is why it is important to have a Canadian policy but it also means toxic substances produced in other countries end up poisoning Canadians. Toxic substances in eastern Europe are currently poisoning breast milk of mothers living in the Canadian Arctic.

Lake Superior is probably the most virgin of the Great Lakes. If we took all the toxins of local creation out of Lake Superior at the moment that lake would be 20 per cent damaged as a result of toxins that come from places that have never even heard of Canada, places very far away where the toxins come out of the smokestacks, get into the atmosphere, travel to the Arctic shield and diffuse over Canada.

That is why we need not only a national strategy but an international strategy for birds flying over our Pacific coast, fish swimming in our Atlantic waters and people living along the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes.

The federal government will use the strategy and the policy announced today as a basis for negotiations with the world community. Next week Canada will host in Vancouver a meeting of the world's leading experts on persistent organic pollutants. We will co-chair the meeting with the Philippines so that we can have the right marriage of countries of the industrialized world as well as countries en voie de développement. International