

Pesticides

Hon. Member who presented the motion has given a great deal of his own particular time, and he should be complimented for that.

I think the issue is whether or not a national task force is the way to deal with the question of providing public information and seeking public input.

I would like to speak as someone who is relatively new to this place and in doing so reflect some of the feedback I receive from my constituents, and that is with respect to task force and/or studies. As an academic, I would never hesitate to defend the need for intensive examination of issues of importance. I think that is a very worthy undertaking and in many cases is well worth the expense of both time and dollars. However, I also think there is a considerable amount of cynicism within the public community with respect to task forces. There is a suggestion that here is another task force or another inquiry with no particular objective in mind. I say that in no way reflecting upon the Hon. Member whose motion is before us. I am simply trying to reflect the type of concern I often hear from the public. In that regard, I must question the expenditure of time and money on what I am afraid many citizens would perceive to be just another task force. There are some people who would suggest we in Parliament study things to death. In view of the reviews which have already taken place and the fact that many of the recommendations which came out of those reviews have been implemented, I would hesitate to go in that particular direction believing that the expenditure of time and money would not be warranted.

I think the mechanism which is in place, the Pest Management Advisory Board, the information system, the constant soliciting of public input, which is very much in place, all combined will ensure, at least into the foreseeable future, that there is adequate opportunity for public input to take place and a guarantee that its input is being recognized and responded to.

In closing, I would like to compliment the Hon. Member for Davenport on his motion. I agree with him that the issue he addresses is a very significant one which is worthy of the attention of this House and the public, but I question whether or not at this point in time we need a national task force to accomplish the objective he has in mind.

Mrs. Pauline Browes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to address this very important issue set forth for us by the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia). Pesticide control and pest management in Canada is a partnership, a partnership in the co-operative efforts between federal Departments and, of course, between the federal Government and the provinces. At the federal level, Agriculture Canada takes the lead as that Department is responsible for the Pest Control Products Act.

• (1740)

Agriculture Canada is supported by three other federal Departments. Health and Welfare is concerned with health issues such as residues of pesticides in foods and exposure to pesticides by the user, those involved in the manufacture and handling of pesticides and bystanders. Fisheries and Oceans looks at the effect of pesticides on fisheries and fish habitats. Furthermore, all Canadians are concerned about effective pesticide use on the environment and wildlife.

On the provincial side, the provinces are responsible for the sale and procedures for the use of pesticides within their borders. Agriculture Canada has undertaken many initiatives along with the other federal agencies to improve the federal regulatory system for pesticides and to restore public confidence and credibility in the management of these important chemical products.

Within Environment Canada, improvements have been made to ensure that the environmental perspective in the regulatory decision-making process is sound and strong. In addition, the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) has made the resolution of the problem of toxic chemicals in Canada one of his chief priorities and we are now beginning to see the results of that effort.

On October 20, 1986, at the Air Pollution Control Association's environmental Government affairs seminar, the Minister of the Environment released two landmark documents. The first such document entitled "From Cradle to Grave: A Management Approach to Chemicals" is the result of the efforts of a group composed of representatives from the chemical industry, labour, environmentalists, consumer groups and federal and provincial Governments. The group came together to devise a management strategy for chemical compounds that would minimize risks to human health and the natural environment without jeopardizing the competitiveness of the Canadian chemical industry. The second document released by the Minister is the report of the consultative committee on the Environmental Contaminants Act amendments which recommends reforms to that law.

The work of both groups assumed added importance and indeed urgency when the Minister announced in 1985 the federal Government's intention to introduce a comprehensive environmental protection Act that would concentrate on toxic chemicals. The legislation was also heralded in the Speech from the Throne.

The document entitled "From Cradle to Grave: A Management Approach to Chemicals" provides the conceptual underpinnings of the proposed environmental protection Act with its stress on prevention. In December, the legislation will be tabled in draft form for public consultation. It will then be introduced in Parliament, hopefully in the spring of 1987.

Environment Canada also has responsibilities that go beyond the strictly legislative base of the Department in the area of chemical management. These include providing an