

of science and technology, and to help Canadian corporations become more innovative and competitive.

Our priorities, Mr. Speaker, are to preserve and to increase, as far as possible, the ability of Canada to undertake pure research studies, to heighten its capacity to carry out applied research, particularly through the pooling of government, industry and university resources, and, maybe still more important, to noticeably step up research and development from sea to sea. Each one of these priorities is based on our commitment to an education of international standard; in other words, to the creation and preservation of a pool of highly qualified men and women which our country will need to be a winner.

As I have just said, Mr. Speaker, I am happy that this debate gives us the opportunity to clarify some misconceptions, some myths. With your permission I should like to consider for a few minutes one of the latter, which is particularly common, that is the myth that government support to science and technology is inadequate.

Quite frankly our level of support to civilian research compares with that of all other major industrialized countries.

Mr. Speaker, government expenditures in science and technology have been steadily increasing, from 4.1 billion dollars in 1984-1985 to about 5.4 billion dollars in the current fiscal year, an increase of more than 33 per cent. Looking at this science and technology envelope, we see that research and development expenditure went from \$2.4 billion to \$3.2 billion an increase of 30 per cent. Such increases exceed the 25 per cent growth in total program spending which clearly indicates that science and technology, as well as research and development, are an absolute priority for the federal government.

This increase in research and development spending went mostly to industries and universities. Federal spending in industrial research and development went from \$422 million to \$776 million, an increase of 85 per cent.

Our university research and development expenses increased by 34 per cent, from \$538 to \$721 million. Mr. Speaker, would any government do that if it refused to make commitments?

This trend will continue because research and development will remain one of our priorities. The recent

Supply

budget provides that grants and contributions for science and technology will increase by 3 per cent annually starting in fiscal year 1992-93. Over a period of 4 years, this increase will result in a financial support of some \$1.5 billion more than present expenses for new or improved initiatives in science and technology.

You should consider all of this and the fact that the Conference Board of Canada acknowledges that the financial support we provide for research and development through our tax system is one of the most generous in the world. Yet, misconceptions continue to spread around. I am really puzzled. I think our critics are just badly short-sighted or lack good faith.

I will forget about monetary matters if I may and concentrate on the approach of our government to research and development promotion.

A very good example is the centres of excellence program. This program which includes participation by over 500 researchers from 35 universities and 37 major corporations, provided a total of \$244 million in federal funds available to 15 networks.

It should be emphasized also that the purpose of these networks is not only to encourage research and development but also to ensure that our capacities in this area are used to foster such economic and social objectives in Canada as reinforcing our industries' competitiveness and promoting a better quality of life for Canadians.

These networks were set up less than a year ago, but their potential is already evident. Consider for instance the important position the fishing industry has in Canada and be advised that there exists an Ocean Production Enhancement Network which could offer new possibilities for the future and make it possible for this industry to remain competitive, in spite of necessary quota reductions.

The network concerned with pest control could improve considerably the level of productivity of both agriculture and forestry while pursuing environmental objectives.

Two other networks will make it possible for Canada to confirm the reputation of excellence it has gained in the areas of space research and communications. Finally, another network devoted to research in the area of hereditary conditions and another one on nerve regeneration and functional rehabilitation will make it possible