

major technical failings. The government knew that Westray would have to comply with all appropriate coal mining regulations in Nova Scotia, including those dealing with mine ventilation and spontaneous combustion matters and that regular provincial mine inspections would be carried out.

According to the mine industry, the causes and mechanisms of coal dust explosions are well understood through past research and it is the responsibility of operators and regulators to apply that knowledge base in developing control strategies.

We put in place steps to ensure that the company was in full compliance with the provincial regulatory standards on health and safety. This was monitored on a monthly basis by independent mining consultants. All of these facts were taken into consideration before making the decision to fund the project.

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to return again to a question I asked the Minister of National Health and Welfare in April of this year. It concerned the measures being taken to address the very alarming findings and recommendations of the International Joint Commission on its Sixth Biennial Report on Great Lakes Water Quality. The report asks: "Are humans and our environment in danger from persistent toxic substances now? Are future generations in danger?" We believe the answer to both questions is yes.

The minister's answer at that time failed totally to respond to the concerns. He gave generalized comments about how the ministry was doing everything it could to protect the health and safety of Canadians, but nothing concrete in terms of responding to the overwhelming condemnation of the discharge of toxic substances into the largest freshwater body on the face of this earth.

We have a commitment, through international agreements, to achieve virtual elimination of the discharge of toxic substances into the Great Lakes. The IJC nonetheless concluded that persistent toxic substances are too dangerous to the biosphere and to humans to permit their release in any quantity.

#### *Adjournment Debate*

Notwithstanding that and notwithstanding a report from the Minister of the Environment's own officials that the entire content of organo-chlorines going into our waterways is a toxic substance, the government has failed to act to eliminate the discharge of these substances into our waterways.

The IJC concludes zero discharge means just that, halting all inputs from all human sources and pathways to prevent any opportunity for persistent toxic substances to enter the environment. To prevent such releases completely, their manufacture, use, transport and disposal must stop. They simply must not be available.

I asked the Minister of National Health and Welfare, given the damage both to parents and to children from these toxic substances, what action was being taken. The answer was totally unsatisfactory. Zero discharge means zero discharge. That is the only safe level according to these very important conclusions.

I hope that in the response this evening I will receive not a vacuous general statement of good intentions, but some reassurance that in the seven months since I asked that question some concrete actions have been taken to approach zero discharge of toxic substances which damage the health, not only of this generation, but of future generations.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Michel Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Forestry):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very attentively to what my colleague said. I would remind her that many programs have been put forward by our environment minister and our government to deal with water quality. We need only think of the very ambitious program to clean up the St. Lawrence. We need only think as well of the amendments to Canadian environmental legislation. We need only think of the new, very strict regulations on dioxins and furans from paper companies in particular. These measures are internationally recognized as courageous action taken by the Canadian government.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, and as the hon. member knows too, environmental awareness necessarily involves better management of toxic wastes. Various countries, as well as Canada, are asking for much more natural products. Of course not only the government but businesses and even the provincial governments are working hand in hand to implement new regulations and adjust to them.