Nuclear Safety and Security

As an energy source that does not create greenhouse gases or contribute to global warming, nuclear power is and will continue to be an important energy provider the world over.

In Canada, 22 nuclear power plants meet close to 20 per cent of the nation's electricity needs; in Ontario, nuclear power provides 60 per cent of the province's requirements. The importance of nuclear power to the Canadian economy has ensured that safety is a top priority in this country. The Atomic Energy Control Board monitors and regulates the nuclear industry in Canada and has played a major part in maintaining Canada's superior nuclear safety record.

Nuclear power is also important to most other G-7 countries as well in many countries of Central and Eastern Europe and in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

The disaster at Unit 4 of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant on April 26, 1986, created widespread concern about the safety of nuclear power. The Chernobyl accident raised serious questions about reactor design, operational procedures and the lack of effective regulatory agencies in Central and Eastern Europe and in the countries of the former Soviet Union; and it pointed to the need for co-ordinated international action.

G-7 Nuclear Safety Assistance

At the 1992 G-7 Summit in Munich, leaders pledged financial and technical assistance to improve the safety of nuclear power plants in the countries of concern. The G-7 Nuclear Safety Working Group was struck to co-ordinate actions to meet this goal. G-7 and other donor countries have now committed more than $1.5 billion in assistance for nuclear safety improvements in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine. Canada has contributed $30 million.

In addition, donors to the Nuclear Safety Account managed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development have contributed more than $220 million to projects in Bulgaria, Lithuania and Russia. A further $180 million has been donated to replenish the account in anticipation of a project, currently being developed by the bank and Ukraine, encompassing short-term improvements at the Chernobyl units still in operation and preparations for closing and decommissioning them all.