

*Supply*

I would argue very strongly that this process and the obligations which flow from it have not only been complied with, but have been respected in every way. It is a process which is evolving very greatly. Why is it an evolutionary process rather than an absolutely black and white regulation? It was only about 50 years ago that we were cleverly beginning to create very complex chemical molecules which were, in many ways, of great benefit to society. We began sticking atoms together in ingenious ways for pharmaceuticals, plastics, and pesticides, many of which were capable of enduring for a long period of time.

We could criticize our ancestors for ignorance of the persistence of chemicals and the analytical techniques which would come along to reveal the existence of chemical substances throughout the environment in vanishingly small concentrations, but that would not help to solve our modern-day problems. Instead, we must take positive, co-operative action. Rather than criticize, we could marvel at the wisdom of generations ago of recognizing the need for co-operation to not pollute the waters of the Great Lakes. I refer, of course, to the Boundary Waters Agreement which was entered into in 1909.

Having discussed the process in a way which I hope explains the redundancy of the motion of the Member for Davenport I would like to suggest that no one in the House could challenge the success of the 1972 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Its main focus was to resolve the phosphorus problem in the Great Lakes. Members will recall that, as the Minister mentioned in his remarks, in the 1960s phosphorus was choking the Great Lakes. It was over-fertilizing them, leading to massive amounts of algae blooms. These blooms would die and wash up on the shore, creating foul-smelling masses of unsightly decaying algae. They would die off each fall and settle to the bottom of Lake Erie, in particular, robbing the lake bottom of its oxygen supply and making fish breeding impossible.

We agreed with our colleagues south of the border to get the necessary treatment facilities to remove the phosphorus from the Great Lakes System. It was a costly undertaking. It cost \$8 billion. I would like to remind Members of the House and Canadians in general that the Americans paid for three quarters of the cost of this \$8 billion project in 1972.

In dealing with phosphorus, we set specific targets to deal with modern-day problems. Today we are also setting specific targets. The results in terms of the phosphorus problem has been abundantly clear. Concentrations have gone down and those lakes are now being restored to their once great status. Clearly in this area the U.S. Government accepted the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement as an obligation and delivered in the end a *bona fide*, solid performance.

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The 1978 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement has been much harder to implement. This is not surprising because dealing with 1,000 complex chemicals is 1,000 times more difficult than dealing with one. The U.S. acceptance of the

1978 agreement as an obligation has meant steady, methodical improvement with relation to our discussions with them as the Government of Canada. Both the U.S. and Canadian Governments have banned many chemicals like mercury, PCBs and dioxins. To make further progress, we will have to continue to co-operate. We have secured this week a U.S. agreement to set specific targets and take specific action on the Niagara River. This is clearly an acceptance of the obligation. However, there is more.

The U.S. Government also agreed this week to apply the strictest standards to the Detroit incinerator in order to save U.S. and Canadian citizens from toxic air pollutants which would fall into our shared water resources. I hope the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor appreciates the very successful representations the Minister of the Environment made on behalf of the Government of Canada to the EPA.

In contrast with what the House Leader of the Official Opposition said in newspaper articles, this is a commitment to not allow the operation of that plant without complete compliance with the U.S. Clean Air Act. That means millions of Canadians, to say nothing of Americans, will be spared the increased health risks which would have occurred if that plant had been otherwise allowed to operate. That is a real success. That is one of three or four things which were on the agenda and which this Government was able to secure on behalf of Canadians in discussions with the EPA.

There is still more. As the 1985 International Joint Commission water quality report shows, most toxic chemicals in the Great Lakes have declined substantially since the 1970s. Chemicals which have seen dramatic reductions include DDT, mercury and many others. This is not Government propaganda, but the objective report of a respected bi-national body of highly qualified environmentalists. The Great Lakes Basin is not the most heavily-polluted ecosystem in North America. I made that point at the beginning and I make it again. That I am sure will be of interest to all Members as the information is released next week in the discussions which will take place on Mackinac Island.

I do not know how much more evidence Hon. Members opposite need to convince them that we are making progress. We have never claimed that we have been totally successful. We know the objectives we have established, both in accepting the fact that there should be zero emissions of these toxic materials, but also in the very practical way of looking at a realistic goal of a 50 per cent reduction by 1995. We know these things are not perfect but they are real, solid progress and they have been achieved through successful negotiations in good faith with the U.S.

The record also shows quite clearly that areas along the St. Clair River, which in 1977 were polluted along 21 kilometres at the bottom of the river itself, have been reduced to only 10 kilometres. That is to say, since 1977, through action already taken by previous Governments and continued by this Government, we are now dealing with an area of concern on the bottom of the St. Clair River which is approximately one-half