

Supply

to identify new avenues instead of simply maintaining existing ones.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Ottawa South. I will allow him a couple of minutes to answer the question.

[Translation]

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a great deal I could say in response to these comments. However, I will probably have an opportunity to do so later on. I would like to start by answering the last part of the question, about the National Research Council. I will answer in English, since that is easier for me.

[English]

I would like to try out an analogy on the parliamentary secretary. I think what we have in the NRC is something like an orchard.

What the government needs at the NRC is a good horticulturalist. Perhaps some cultivation is necessary. Maybe we need to do a little bit of pruning and spraying. Maybe the odd tree is unproductive and should be cut down, but maybe there are new varieties of fruit required and we should do a little bit of grafting to get some new varieties of fruit.

What the the government has done is it has decided to make a cut. Instead of sending in the horticulturalist it sent in the local wood cutter. He chopped down a bunch of trees. He chopped down the ones closest to the road because they were easiest to haul away. Worse than that, there was no attempt to choose the trees that were unproductive, he just cut down trees. It was a chain-saw massacre at the orchard.

In this analogy, just to stretch it a little more, these trees know what is going on. The good and productive ones are scared out of their minds. They can uproot themselves, leave the orchard and go to another orchard. A lot of them are doing that. The ones that are not that productive are the ones staying there. They are scared and more unproductive than ever.

I suggest to the parliamentary secretary that she consult a horticulturalist in dealing with the National Research Council.

[Translation]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Science and Technology)): Mr. Speaker, I can now respond more specifically to the hon. member's comments on the National Research Council.

Perhaps I may repeat, for the hon. member's benefit, that traditionally, the National Research Council has been Canada's foremost research institute, and it continues to be the cornerstone of the government's science and technology strategy.

During the past five years, we have relied on the NRC's well established resources to enhance its impact in a number of ways, as I will explain in a moment.

Its role will become even more important in the future. By insinuating that the NRC's role has recently been diminished, opposition members show they are ignorant of the real situation and the dynamic nature of the National Research Council of Canada.

The NRC has a broad mandate to initiate, support and promote scientific and industrial research projects. It has carried out this mandate in many fields since it was created 75 years ago, and it continues to do so with great vigour.

Today, as when the NRC was first established, its work is characterized by the ability to evolve with Canada's changing needs. Today, thanks to the government's support, the NRC has an annual budget of over \$400 million and about 3,000 employees in programs and facilities across the country.

It is one of the most flexible and powerful instruments the Government of Canada has to support science and technology in Canada.

One could also say that the government supports the NRC in various ways so that it can act as the cornerstone of Canadian science and technology.

We must not forget that the NRC spends about \$215 million annually on supporting our national scientific and technological infrastructure.

The NRC's programs and facilities make it possible for engineers and scientists in industry, government and universities across Canada to carry out R and D in many important sectors.

This contribution to the Canadian science and technology infrastructure includes maintaining large federal facilities for science and engineering, such as basins for testing ship's models and all the very sophisticated