

in the works. It will provide high speed transmission, the availability to transmit from one research unit to another right across the country, and it will ensure that those networks or those university research institutions which are not in central Canada will co-operate the same way as anyone else.

With respect to the networks of excellence, my colleague will be aware that those are spread across the country, not because of any action that we took but because the peer review committee found excellence across the country. The networks are a way to bring groups together wherever they are. They do not have to be in central Canada. There was certainly no bias toward central Canada in the way that was done. In fact it was probably just the opposite.

We are working on a major high speed network, a major study to see if it is feasible to put in Canada a significant network of very high speed that would transmit photographs and hook all of the research institutions together. That feasibility study is now going on.

My hon. colleague says we need to do more about education. Of course we need the people if we are to have a science and technology based country. I agree with him.

It is significant that last summer the Prime Minister said that we had to look at this problem as a national problem and not just as a provincial problem. So for the first time the Prime Minister took the lead in setting up a national task force on education which could look at the educational issue from the point of view of what we need to make this country competitive. That has never been done before.

With respect to science and technology policy, there is no question what the science and technology policy of this government is. It is very clear. My hon. colleague may not like what it is, but it has always been very clear. We are going to maintain and enhance where we possibly can the amount of curiosity driven research that we do in Canada. We are going to try to enhance the pre-competitive research that is done in co-operation with industry. We are going to try to promote industrial research and the alliances that are so necessary. Those are all on the record.

Mr. Pagtakhn: Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the comments of the minister. The absence of clarity is not so much that we cannot understand, but

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because this government has said something and done just the opposite.

In terms of the centres of excellence which we have welcomed, the government laboratories have been asked to be involved, yet funding for the government laboratories has been decreased. Where is the beef, if I may say, as to the commitment of this government?

A task force on education to identify the needs for the country is excellent. However, the National Science Advisory Board, directly reporting to the Prime Minister, recommended doubling the funding for research and development, and the Prime Minister has ignored that recommendation. What guarantee do we have that after the task force has done its job, has made a series of recommendations, this government will not again ignore recommendations? Will the minister now commit to the House that the recommendations of the task force when it reports will be implemented and implemented promptly?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The Chair is in a difficult situation. I realize that the minister would like to answer the hon. member. There is a minute left in the period of questions and comments, yet it is turning into a conversation between whoever has the floor and the minister. I am quite prepared, if the House agrees, to have the hon. minister answer.

Some hon. members: No.

Mrs. Maheu: On a point of Order, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Obviously, I understand that I do not have the consent of the member to have the minister answer the question posed by her colleague. We will resume debate.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for Science): Madam Speaker, first I want to thank the Liberal opposition for this opportunity to talk about what the department and the government have been doing to promote research and development. For openness I might say that I find the subject of the motion rather puzzling because I fail to see why the government should be criticized after having done so much for research and development.

One of our outstanding achievements has to be the trend towards unprecedented co-operation between the public and private sectors. I would suggest that this new approach is here to stay and, thanks to a few measures I