

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the clear implication of the Hon. Member's question is that the federal Government has done nothing in this area over the last three years. The fact is, number one, for the first time ever we have prepared a national inventory of PCB storage facilities across the country; number two, we pressed into service low-level PCB decontamination centres across the country in seven provinces. Only three do not have them. Third, we have laid the groundwork for PCB destruction plants in Alberta, Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec. We now have one on stream in Alberta and one is about to come on stream in Quebec and in Ontario.

We have imposed, Sir, strict federal regulations under the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act for all shipments of PCBs from one end of the country to the other. We have instituted strict regulations with respect to the importation of PCBs, the manufacture of PCBs, the sale of equipment using PCBs, and finally, Sir, with respect to the wilful release of PCBs into the environment. Now that we have the Environmental Protection Act in place we intend to bring the full force of the law down upon violators wherever they may be.

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● (1425)

[Translation]

HEALTH

SAINT-BASILE-LE-GRAND TRAGEDY—LABORATORY ANALYSES—
GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. After the Saint-Basile-le-Grand tragedy, 3,000-odd people underwent health examinations in Charles Lemoyne Hospital, including blood and breast milk analyses. They are anxiously awaiting the results.

Apparently, hospital authorities are still looking for laboratories to detect traces of dioxin and furans in blood and breast milk. How come such analyses are not a priority with the Minister of National Health and Welfare? Parents are concerned about the health of their children, pregnant women and new mothers are concerned that breast milk may be contaminated. Can the Minister give us assurances that his Department has taken the necessary steps to have those analyses done within the shortest timeframe?

[English]

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the Member's question is yes. With respect to the health protection branch and the LCDC, we are giving whatever help is requested. We are testing as well.

The Member made a valid point about the time lapse for information once a test has been conducted and about the toxicological work that has to be done. We are developing information. We have notified the Province of Quebec and will make that available to every one of the people affected as well. I have been told that that should be available by tomorrow night or the day after.

*[Translation]*ANALYSES OF BLOOD AND BREAST MILK—GOVERNMENT
POSITION

Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the same Minister. Will the Minister confirm whether it is true that the Food Research Division in his Department is today busy analyzing blood and breast milk samples or whether, as one medical officer told us, this is not a priority with the Department of National Health and Welfare, and samples are sitting on the shelves.

[English]

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that is not correct. I do not know to whom the Hon. Member is referring. I have checked with my Department to ensure that we are giving every cooperation in that respect.

I also phoned the Minister of Health in Quebec and assured her of every assistance that we are willing to give and that if they want any further assistance we would be ready to give that as well.

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DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES

SECURITY OF PCB STORAGE SITES

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday the Minister of Labour, who was filling in for the Minister, told the House that as a result of the new law that is now in place Canadians no longer need to have any concern about potential disasters of the kind which took place in the past week in Quebec with PCBs. Just after he said that an expert in the Minister's own Department said the following: "We don't know a hell of a lot about these sites and we can't do a damn thing about it" if we find that they are unsafe.

My question to the Minister is straightforward. Who is correct in this situation, the Minister of Labour who said that we should rest assured, or the expert in the Minister's Department who says he can do nothing about it?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the Minister of Labour intended to imply, and certainly I did not infer from his answer, that because of CEPA we would have a Linus blanket that would prevent pollution from occurring or accidents from taking place. There was no such exaggerated claim.