

Oral Questions

of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, but there are a great many Canadians who are equally preoccupied with the controversy surrounding urea formaldehyde foam insulation. I wonder if the minister can give us a progress report on the inter-ministerial committee looking into some form of compensation or assistance to people who have installed this UFFI material in their homes.

Can the minister also tell the House whether this committee will say what happens to those people who have installed urea formaldehyde foam insulation, and who may or may not have a health problem and want to get it out of their homes, but find themselves in a legal bind because they owe it to prospective buyers to tell them that they have the stuff in their homes? Does the Government of Canada have any responsibility? Does it consider that it has any moral responsibility to those people who have the stuff in their homes and who want to get it out of their homes? Does the government have any responsibility to these many thousands of Canadians?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, obviously the hon. member asked several questions. I will try to answer briefly. First, the interdepartmental committee will get together early next week to study a series of hypotheses which the cabinet will finalize at its next meeting. Second, as to the government responsibility, I have already said, and I repeat to the House, that the government does not accept any legal responsibility in this matter over which the government is nonetheless particularly concerned. We are just as anxious to find concrete solutions as those who have to cope with this problem, and I would ask the hon. member to wait until next week when, after the cabinet meeting, the government will announce a series of appropriate measures.

[English]

REFERRAL TO PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): My supplementary question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare, who will be interested to know that at this very hour a group is forming in the community of St. Leonard in her own riding, one of the many groups which are concerned about urea formaldehyde foam insulation.

Once the government releases this report which the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs promises will come out next week, will the Minister of National Health and Welfare immediately refer the UFFI matter to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, or a special subcommittee, so that the whole question of compensation, the health factor, and, indeed, the procedure leading up to the ban, can be investigated by calling witnesses? Would the minister not agree that this House and the Canadian people need to know that the government has received the correct advice and made the right decisions?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): My answer is no, Madam Speaker, for the good reason that referral to a committee of the House would not be of much help to Canadians for the moment. As was indicated by my colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, we are reviewing the types of assistance that we can eventually offer upon request to people who are experiencing difficulties. In reply to his preamble, I can say that on Monday morning and Monday evening in Montreal, I did receive people from my constituency who, like people throughout St. Leonard, have unfortunately had their brick houses insulated with urea foam even though this was specifically forbidden when we certified it.

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FISHERIES

INQUIRY RESPECTING COMPENSATION TO QUEBEC FISHERMEN
BANNED FROM COMMERCIAL FISHING

Mr. Rémi Bujold (Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Madam Speaker, my question for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans concerns the decision of the Quebec government not to re-open commercial salmon fishing on June 8, next Monday. In his statement, the Quebec minister of recreation, hunting and fishing, accused the federal Minister of Fisheries of not having taken into account the regressing stocks of breeders and not having consulted the Quebec government before making his decision. Is it true that the decision of the Canadian government will be harmful to breeding stocks? Were there consultations with the Quebec government before this decision was made, and finally, what will be the decision of the Canadian government as far as compensating those Quebec fishermen who will not be able to fish salmon commercially during the summer?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, a decision has been made. The ban on commercial salmon fishing will be lifted after nine years, with of course due consideration being given to present stocks. This fishing will necessarily be on a rather small scale, but I felt that commercial fishermen had contributed to stock conservation by abstaining completely from fishing in certain provinces including certain rivers in Quebec, for a nine-year period. In fact, the federal government had to support the cost of this ban by paying compensation for nine years. There have been consultations with Quebec authorities at the official level. A meeting was scheduled with the minister responsible, Mr. Lessard. He cancelled the meeting, for which I do not blame him as I think that he was ill. I was prepared to arrange for another meeting, but unfortunately the Quebec government held elections and consultations were not possible. As the season was about to open, a decision had to be reached so we