

essentially to save money that CN Express is following this course, although that is important; it is because CN does not see how it can compete with other firms which are specialized and have a much more selective approach to small parcel transportation. If CN thought it could compete favourably it would stay there.

I would also like to underline the fact that when CN Express gets out of some of these operations, small parcels in particular, other transportation firms will be providing jobs as they take over. So it is not as if jobs were being lost; they are being transferred from CN Express, which cannot compete, to other trucking companies which can.

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HEALTH CARE

USE OF PRE-NATAL SCREENING KITS

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. It has to do with the fact that the government appears unable to restrict the sale and, even worse, the promotion of certain pre-natal screening kits which are designed to detect the neurological disease called spinal bifida. In view of the fact that there is great doubt about the accuracy of the test results, to say nothing of whether such tests are appropriate, can the minister tell us what she intends to do about this particular problem?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, with respect to this particular problem, which is a problem of misuse more than anything else, I have written to the provincial ministers of health as well as to the medical profession specifying the conditions of use of these pre-natal screening kits. I brought to their attention the dimensions of the problem—the misuse of these kits.

Mr. Blaikie: It is not simply a question of misuse but rather a question of whether these kits should be available for use at all without adequate testing having taken place before they are put on the market. This is not the first time that something has been more stringently regulated in the United States than in Canada. My question to the minister is: does she plan any changes in Canada's health protection legislation finally to overcome the long-standing situation of trial by guinea pig? In this case, as in so many others, Canadian women and/or their children are placed at risk because of the government's totally inadequate policy in this particular area.

● (1440)

[Translation]

Miss Bégin: Madam Speaker, I regret to disagree with the charge laid by the hon. member. We still believe that pre-natal screening kits designed to detect foetal malformations are an important precaution since they can help to detect and prevent

some abnormalities. We feel that these kits can do a fine job if they are used properly. Physicians and potential users have been cautioned against the misuse of these kits. If this is not satisfactory, the next step would be to meet with all those concerned as well as provincial health ministers, and we might have to decide to ban the kits from the market.

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ENERGY

REQUEST FOR REPORT ON TALKS CONCERNING OIL IMPORTS FROM SAUDI ARABIA

Mr. Carlo Rossi (Bourassa): Madam Speaker, could the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources or his parliamentary secretary tell the House what progress has been made in the discussions on the eventual purchase by PetroCan of 100,000 barrels of oil per day from Saudi Arabia, and whether the minister feels this is a favourable offer or not for our country?

[English]

Mr. Roy MacLaren (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I can confirm that Petro-Canada will be entering into negotiations very shortly with the Saudi Arabian state enterprise called Petromin and that the government welcomes the offer on the part of the government of Saudi Arabia to underline our secure sources of petroleum with that country by the possibility of entering into a state to state trading agreement.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

ACID RAIN—STRENGTHENING OF CANADA-UNITED STATES AGREEMENT

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Madam Speaker, my question is supplementary to the questions posed to the Minister of the Environment by the hon. member for Oshawa, and it concerns the Canada-U.S. scientific survey on acid rain. That survey has demonstrated that the acid rain problem in Canada and the United States is both more geographically widespread and more severe than had previously been thought. For example, scientists considered 140 lakes in Ontario biologically dead, but this survey demonstrates that that figure may be as high as 4,000 lakes. Is the Minister of the Environment, therefore, intending to seek changes which might strengthen the Canada-U.S. tentative agreement on acid rain in light of this most alarming survey?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of State for Science and Technology and Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, as I previously stated to the House, and as the hon. member knows, we are continuing as actively as possible the discussions which are under way with the United States. I have also in mind some other possibilities which may be available to us and which will enhance our ability, jointly with the United