

Oral Questions

radon. I should point out as well that work has been done. When he says that possibly the highest levels of radon exist in homes in Winnipeg and the Red River Valley, that is correct, and that is the reason why this scientific survey has been going on, both as to the extent of the gas and the recommendations that should come from that type of study.

Additionally, on October 12 a federal-provincial meeting on occupational health and safety is taking place. This has been put on the agenda and I have indicated to my officials that I want recommendations as to what position should be taken.

I would also say to the Hon. Member that when the EPA comes forward with the study it did yesterday, it has to have State support for radon work. Additionally, I should point out that there are in fact four standards relating to picocuries which the U.S. uses.

● (1430)

REQUEST THAT MINISTER ISSUE HEALTH ADVISORY WARNING

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that the Minister of National Health and Welfare takes the matter seriously. However, I point out to him that the study into a correlation between lung cancer and radon in the city of Winnipeg will not be completed for another two years. In the meantime the conditions described in the U.S. Surgeon General's report will prevail and there may be a serious health risk right across the country.

In light of the findings by the U.S. Surgeon General would it not be proper for the Minister's Department to issue a health advisory, similar to that which U.S. officials issued yesterday, warning all provincial and municipal officials about the dangers and indicating that comprehensive testing should be a requirement in all areas across the country which might have a potential for the kind of serious high level radon pollution which is affecting the city of Winnipeg? We share the same province, and I think it would be advisable to issue that advisory particularly for the city of Winnipeg.

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am obviously going to take that recommendation seriously. It is for that reason that I said that after the October 12 meeting I want a very clear recommendation from scientists and officials as to what the approach should be.

I am not trying to deprecate the work of either the EPA or the report. The Government has previously done studies through CMHC. While there is a question about the linkage between radon gas and lung cancer, that is not the point of contention for this Minister of Health. I am interested in the best position to take with regard to whether testing should take place and a health advisory should be issued. That must be based on scientific fact.

The Member says that there should be information provided to the public. I have further instructed the Department, under

what we refer to as issues papers, that information regarding radon and its control is to be published and released to the public by the Department in very short order.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

REQUEST THAT DEPARTMENTS CARRY OUT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STUDIES

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is for either the Prime Minister or the Minister of the Environment. The Prime Minister recently expressed concern about a national vision on the environment. At present no federal Department is legislatively required to have an environmental impact study done in terms of the consequences of major decisions.

The Federal Environment Review Office, an agency of the federal Government, earlier this year recommended to the Government that it act to change the Canadian law and make it mandatory that environmental impact studies be done automatically according to law.

Given this expressed concern about the environment, why was this legislative requirement not included in the Environmental Protection Act when it was drafted and put into place in June?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the NDP is obviously not speaking to the environment critic for the NDP. When I appeared before the legislative committee on the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, although I do acknowledge that she was rarely there, I made the point that I thought it vital that we have two different but parallel consultation processes; one leading up to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act itself, focusing on a major reform of chemicals legislation in the country, and a separate one on FEARO, the process having to do with federal environmental assessments and reviews.

The public consultation on FEARO has now been completed. I have in my office the report of the broadly-based group. The group recommended that the federal environmental assessment review process be legislated. I am on record as favouring that principle. The issue is now before the Cabinet and is being discussed and resolved. I think that, in very short order, there will be an announcement one way or the other. It would be premature for me to say what the decision of Cabinet will be on the substantive question, but I am personally on record as favouring a legislative approach.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the people of Canada will find it very reassuring that the Minister is on record. They want to see law passed by the Parliament of Canada, not another promise.