

Oral Questions

Programs such as the one suggested by a few members of Toronto's City Council of giving drug addicts free syringes in order to attempt to control AIDS must be seriously questioned. Drug use cannot be condoned under any circumstance. Addicts must be urged to curtail their use of drugs and not be provided with better tools for their use.

I hope Toronto Council forgets this foolishness and instead supports Metro Chief Jack Marks' request for 100 more officers to help stem the flow of drugs.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES**DESTRUCTION OF PCBs—ABSENCE OF REGULATIONS**

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. He knows that as of last week PCB has become a household term across Canada and our international reputation, as well as our domestic reputation, hinge on how well we will solve this problem.

The Canadian Environmental Protection Act was proclaimed in June of this year. The Act covers storage, handling, and destruction of PCBs. On that day the Minister of the Environment announced that:

"The Government will get tough on polluters... and take offenders to court..."

On the same day the appointment of senior investigation officers was announced in all regions of Canada, including Montreal. Thus Canadians were led to believe by the Minister that they would be protected from PCBs.

Can the Minister inform the House today and explain why there are no federal regulations regarding the destruction of PCBs?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, as a former Minister of the Environment the Hon. Member for Davenport should know that until the Canadian Environmental Protection Act was proclaimed on June 30 the federal Government, largely because of neglect by the Member's Party, lacked the legislative authority to act. We now can, including through the use of regulations.

Historically the management of PCBs has been shared by the federal and provincial governments. We have engaged in a Canada-wide program in that regard to ensure that the provinces and the federal Government are not acting at cross purposes.

I can assure the Hon. Member for Davenport, and through him I can assure the House, that unless national standards under CEPA are met by every province, and storage and incinerator facilities meet the highest standards of environmental protection, that territory at present occupied by the

provinces, provided enforcement at the provincial level is not done, will be occupied by the federal authority. We intend to act.

● (1420)

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC—REQUEST FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF REGULATIONS

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, we have heard this rhetoric since 1985, and I am glad to hear the Minister reversing himself and all of a sudden becoming very bold on the floor of the House of Commons about federal jurisdiction, having reversed the thrust of the Bill in committee some six months ago. That is quite a reversal.

If the Minister has all of a sudden found courage and sounds like a lion on the floor of the House of Commons, when can we expect from him action on PCBs for the protection of Canadians, through CEPA, and announce the regulations for the destruction of PCBs? When will he stop hiding behind provincial Environment Ministers? When will he do that?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am not hiding behind provincial Environment Ministers or anyone else. Under the authority of the Government of Canada, through myself, the Department of the Environment has arranged for every single PCB storage facility in the country under federal jurisdiction to be identified. We are ensuring that those sites meet the most rigorous national standards for storage.

Second, we have engaged in an exercise with the provinces to identify all PCB storage sites across the country under provincial jurisdiction. I can tell the Hon. Member that if in any one province any site does not meet national standards for PCB storage, then the federal Government will swoop in and occupy the territory.

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, the one who has swooped and swallowed himself in his rhetoric is the Minister of the Environment. He is reversing himself on the floor of the House of Commons, having taken a position 180 degrees diametrically opposite in committee on CEPA. Anyway, I wish him luck.

[Translation]

DESTRUCTION OF PCBs—CHEMICAL TRANSFORMATION TECHNOLOGY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): My question is directed to the Minister responsible for Science and Technology or to anyone answering today for that Department. It involves the new chemical transformation technology to destroy PCBs. I would like to ask the Minister why it took so long to launch the development of advanced technology for destroying PCBs? Would the \$60 million cut in the Council's funding, initiated by the Minister of Finance in 1985, including the elimination of the Environment Secretariat, be the cause of that slowdown?