

Oral Questions

this subject and whether the government of Canada is taking special steps to help the victims of this disaster?

Miss Monique Bégin (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we have received reports inasmuch as telex communications are possible. We were very sad to hear that an earthquake apparently killed at least 132 people up to now, in the areas of Udine and Padua, in northern Italy. However there were no reports of Canadian citizens being involved.

Let me take advantage of this opportunity to express our deeply felt sadness to all Italo-Canadian families of Frioul-ian origin and our sympathy to the Italian government. I shall simply add that CIDA is in close contact with the International Red Cross and the Canadian Red Cross to determine whether we may be of any help.

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● (1150)

[English]

HEALTH**POLIO VIRUS IN OTTAWA AREA—SUSCEPTIBILITY OF STRAIN TO SALK VACCINE—REASON FOR DELAY IN TESTING**

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. On May 3, in the minister's absence I directed a question to his parliamentary secretary regarding the five strains of polio virus which had been found in two sewage treatment plants in the Ottawa area. I asked whether these virus samples had been sent to the biology laboratory. The parliamentary secretary stated they had just been sent and that no report had been received. I now want to ask the minister two questions. First, can he tell us whether the report of the biology lab has been received and whether these strains are susceptible to Salk vaccine? Second, why, since the department knew of this since last January, were these tests not made at an earlier date.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the data relating to the 15 polio viruses that were isolated in the Ottawa area were reported at the symposium held at the University of Ottawa on January 23, 1976 at which were present officials from the local health authority, the Ontario health authority, and the federal government. Our report to the University of Ottawa indicated that ten of the 15 polio viruses were classified as vaccine-like. The remaining five strains showed no reaction with Sabin vaccine anti-serum, but could not be characterized, I repeat, could not be characterized as virulent strains. I am advised that it is rather difficult to establish the origin of the five polio virus strains, but the polio virus is a relatively stable one. Therefore, immunization with either Sabin or Salk vaccine would be quite adequate to meet the problem in this instance.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): In view of the fact there is a difference of opinion among medical authorities as to whether Salk vaccine has only limited application for certain strains and Sabin vaccine

[Mr. Prud'homme.]

provides complete immunity, will the minister advise the House whether the tests have been received from the biology lab, as I am sure the minister would not want to carry on or have the province carry on an immunization program only to find out the vaccine they have used provides only limited protection.

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member, being a layman in the field like myself, will not want to create undue fears vis-à-vis the effectiveness of the existing vaccine in Canada. I might advise him that the National Advisory Committee on Immunizing Agents met last October 30 and 31 to study the matter of all vaccines presently used in Canada, and proposed an immunization schedule. Both Sabin and Salk vaccines were found suitable to fight polio. They are both acceptable ways of treating polio. With regard to these particular strains that have been identified, I am advised that there is no reason to doubt that either vaccine would be adequate to combat them.

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[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE**REQUEST THAT BILL C-84 BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General.

In view of the importance of Bill C-84 and the interest it arouses throughout Canada, would the minister indicate whether he would agree to the bill being referred to the Committee of the Whole instead of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs?

[English]

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, that would be something which should be discussed with the government House leader and the other House leaders. I guess they would have to take that suggestion under consideration.

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AIRPORTS**PICKERING—POSSIBILITY OF CONTINUING EXPENDITURES—SUGGESTION TRAFFIC NOT BE DIVERTED TO MIRABEL—CONSULTATIONS WITH ONTARIO**

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. With \$137 million already spent or committed to be spent on the proposed Pickering Airport, an amount equal to 43 per cent of the amount spent on Mirabel, which may be a white elephant, large in size and small in usage, will the minister indicate if this type of spending on Pickering is to continue with respect to an airport which, if completed, will not be needed and, indeed, may sit isolated without roads or services?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with the hon. member's reference