

It is in the interest of us all including Canadian farmers to sell as much wheat as possible as quickly as possible.

[English]

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg—St. James): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the minister responding for revenue today.

Until recently Canadian farmers trucking grain to the United States were required to fill out what was called the B-13 form for customs officials at the border. I am now advised by customs officials in the province of Manitoba that this practice has been dropped. This raises the possibility that some farmers will neglect going to the elevator and acquiring an export permit. They will simply cross the border, no questions asked.

My question is what possible motive lies behind the elimination of customs inspection of grain shipments by truck?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, once again I shall note the question, which is technical, and answer my colleague as soon as possible.

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[English]

THALIDOMIDE VICTIMS

Mr. Alex Kindy (Calgary Northeast): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of health and welfare regarding the extraordinary assistance plan for thalidomide victims.

I brought three thalidomide victims cases from my riding to the minister's attention in November 1991. All have legal medical proof that their mothers took thalidomide during pregnancy. However, the bureaucrat in his department is stonewalling, refusing to grant hearings, and making unqualified decisions.

As the program expires on March 31, is he going to take his ministerial responsibilities seriously and look over those decisions and ensure that my constituents receive all the benefits they are entitled to?

Oral Questions

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I always take all my responsibilities seriously.

I just want to say that the member is right, those decisions were made by the office, but they were made in collaboration with all organizations dealing with the problem of thalidomide.

Moreover, it was done in a way that today all those who qualified as victims are satisfied with the settlement we proposed. We are very close to making the final announcement. Those who were not considered were not considered because they were not qualified under the policy we recently put forward.

Mr. Alex Kindy (Calgary Northeast): Mr. Speaker, I am not happy with the response of the minister. He tells me that the decision was made by his bureaucrat. My information is that the bureaucrat had no consultation with physicians or legal people. Is the minister going to take his responsibility seriously and review those cases instead of letting them be handled by someone who is not qualified? Yes or no.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): No.

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ATMOSPHERIC CONTAMINANTS

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the minister of health.

A delegation of B.C. New Democrat MPs has just returned from a tour of the Hanford nuclear bomb plant in Richland, Washington. The scientists at Hanford confirmed that residents of southeastern British Columbia were likely exposed to atmospheric radioactive contamination from the years of both accidental and deliberate releases of atmospheric contaminants from Hanford. What we do not know is how much or whether there have been any long-term health effects.

Will the minister recognize the need to send a Canadian team of scientists to Hanford to work with the scientists involved in the Hanford Dose Reconstruction Project in order to better determine the extent to which Canadians may have been put at risk?