

a priority, and then to clean the system and have an orderly plan of bringing the product back. That is the best way to handle the industry—

Mr. Gauthier: How about compensation?

Mr. Tobin: Answer the question.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): I am answering the question. The hon. gentleman last Friday said the health alert was over-reaction. Today he is yapping about something else. Get your act straight.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gauthier: So much for compensation.

FISHERIES INSPECTION PROGRAM—REQUEST THAT PUBLIC INQUIRY BE INSTITUTED

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Prime Minister. There is a loss of confidence by Canadians which has increased as a result of the second death from mussel poisoning, a loss of confidence in the Government's fisheries inspection program and the Government's ability to respond quickly and appropriately to a problem of such seriousness.

The handling of this matter has also caused financial chaos in the shellfish industry in Atlantic Canada. Will the Prime Minister demonstrate that his Government can act responsibly by instituting a public inquiry into the whole sequence of events and the procedures of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and immediately announce a compensation program for those in the shellfish industry who have been so drastically affected and for those whose health has been injured?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman asked the same question yesterday and I answered it yesterday.

Mr. McCurdy: No, he didn't.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): I say to him again that the operations centre has a very clear plan in mind. I can say to the Member and to the House that after the press release of this morning at six a.m.—I believe that was the agreed time it would go out—tomorrow there will be a further briefing in the operations centre in terms of the testing procedure and the reintroduction into market—

Mr. Riis: Compensation, Jake.

Mr. Epp (Provencher):—which I think is the best plan at this stage respecting the reintroduction of product into the market. That is as far as I will go today and that is as far as I went yesterday. The answer remains the same.

Mr. McCurdy: What about compensation? That was the question.

Oral Questions

RESPONSIBILITY OF MINISTER OF FISHERIES

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, has the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans been put out to pasture on this issue? It is his Department, his inspection procedures, we are talking about. He is the one who should know about compensation programs. Why does he not get up on his feet and announce a compensation program and an inquiry into his own procedures?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the issue of health is the primary issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Riis: The question is about compensation, Jake.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): That issue remains the primary issue and all the actions we are taking relating to the actions of yesterday, which were explained in the House, the actions which we took today with the press release and, again with explanation in the House, what we are doing today, what we have said we will do tomorrow and the type of briefing for tomorrow and what action, that is on a very clear plan as to how the health of Canadians can be protected and the best action for the industry, and I am following that plan and I am sticking to that plan.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF MINISTER OF RENEWABLE RESOURCES AND CULTURE, AND OF MINISTER OF SOCIAL SERVICES, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Mr. Speaker: I wish to bring to the attention of Hon. Members the presence in the gallery of two Members from the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly the Hon. Titus Allooloo, Minister of Renewable Resources and Culture and Communications, and the Hon. Jeannie Marie Jewell, Minister of Social Services.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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[Translation]

FISHERIES

TOXIC MUSSELS—OPPORTUNITY TO OFFER COMPENSATION TO VICTIMS

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Prime Minister and get back to the issue of compensation for the victims of toxic mussels, particularly in light of negligence on the part of two Cabinet Ministers. We know that the first alarm was sounded four days late—on December 1—because lab tests results