

[English]

Mr. Jamieson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I simply point out to the hon. member that many regions of Quebec, other than the Montreal and Quebec city areas which he mentioned, have received attention. Indeed, only a couple of months ago a number of areas strategically located throughout the province were designated for the creation of, for example, industrial parks. I will be glad to discuss with the hon. member the specific geographic region he has in mind and to initiate specific talks along those lines with the government of Quebec, if it has not been done already, but I suspect it has.

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● (1430)

HEALTH

SALE OF TAINTED MEAT IN QUEBEC—REASON FOR DELAY IN ACTION BY FEDERAL DEPARTMENT

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare, one of whose inspectors yesterday testified before the crime commission in Montreal that the federal government knew about the meat situation in the Province of Quebec as far back as 1968 and that by January, 1974, the situation was, to quote him, so serious as to be frightening. I should like to ask the minister why this situation was allowed to continue for so long, indeed, to continue until the crime commission was appointed in Quebec, and why, in the words of the inspector, no tangible results were achieved from any of the efforts made by the hon. gentleman's department? Yet this public inquiry appointed by the government of Quebec immediately gets results.

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to send to the Leader of the Opposition a copy of the testimony of the inspector in which he will find an answer to his questions. He will even note that the inspector has clearly shown before the committee that the necessary inquiry could only be carried out by the police force with its facilities available for that purpose. It was impossible with the indications which my inspectors had to provide any evidence.

[English]

Mr. Stanfield: In view of the evidence of the inspector that he was not able to get any results in 1973 and that the police, when they were called in, were not getting any results either, why did the minister not take some other course of action such as the appointment of a public inquiry? As we know, a public inquiry did get results eventually. Is there any way in which the minister can justify this situation being allowed to continue from 1968 to 1975?

[Translation]

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I can merely speak about the period during which I was minister, but I can give the assurance to the Leader of the Opposition that the inquiry

Oral Questions

carried out by the police force gave some results. They have been submitted to the commission which would have been unable to discover what it did find out without the work performed by the police force throughout the inquiry.

[English]

SALE OF TAINTED MEAT IN QUEBEC—REASON FOR FAILURE TO ACT UNDER FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Was the government of Canada aware that meat unfit for human consumption was being sold in the Province of Quebec as far back as 1968, as appears from the sworn testimony given in Montreal by an inspector from the hon. gentleman's department? If so, can the minister explain why he did not proceed under the Food and Drugs Act regardless of any inquiry which was taking place in Quebec, especially since the present inquiry has nothing to do directly with the meat situation? The current revelations are merely incidental to an inquiry into organized crime in Quebec.

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I repeat once again that suspicions existed as far back as 1968. As the inspector concerned indicated very clearly, there were consultations with police authorities to determine whether it was possible to obtain any subsequent evidence. It seems that that could not then be done. As I pointed out in the House previously, new efforts were made later on, they were successful, as evidenced by the inquiry now going on in Quebec. Once more, I shall be happy to give the hon. member a copy of the testimony of the inspector concerned, which shows very well the efforts made by my department during that whole period.

[English]

SALE OF TAINTED MEAT IN QUEBEC—INQUIRY WHETHER FEDERAL DEPARTMENT INFORMED QUEBEC OR ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CANADA OF SITUATION

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's West): I apologize if this further question sounds repetitious, Mr. Speaker, but I can assure you it is germane in the light of new evidence. In view of the fact there are more than 300 slaughterhouses in Quebec which are not under federal inspection or any inspection, and given the fact that the federal government knew as far back as 1968 that meat unfit for human consumption was being sold for human consumption—the evidence indicates that sales had reached massive proportions by 1973—did the hon. gentleman's department inform the government of Quebec of its suspicions and, in particular, did it inform the Attorney General of Canada what was taking place with a view to proceeding under the Food and Drugs Act?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat what I have always said in the House. It is always the same thing, it is quite clear, the facts have been established. I merely invite the hon. member to refer to the questions which have been