

## HEALTH

EVIDENCE OF MERCURY POISONING AMONG INDIANS IN  
QUEBEC—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO PROVIDE ALTERNATE  
SOURCE OF PROTEIN

**Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster):** Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare and it concerns his responsibility for the health of the native people of Canada. A report issued by Dr. Barbeau of the provincial health department in Quebec states that out of 48 Cree Indians examined 20 have signs of Minimata disease and three are confirmed as having brain damage. Since the main source of protein in that area, as it was in Grassy Narrows, is fish, and since the summer season for these people is approaching, what plans has the government made with regard to providing alternate protein sources for these people? Are we going to say again, "don't eat fish"?

● (1150)

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, Dr. Barbeau is not a civil servant of the provincial government, but an eminent doctor practising in a Montreal hospital. About the question relating to the protein and the food taken by the Indians concerned, we are in very close consultation with the provincial government in an attempt to correct the situation and plans are under review on this matter. As the hon. member knows, the mercury contamination in this area seems to stem from natural elements. It is an exceptional situation. Comprehensive measures therefore will have to be taken throughout the whole region.

[English]

MERCURY POISONING AMONG INDIANS—SUGGESTED  
MASSIVE EXAMINATION OF NATIVES TO IDENTIFY VICTIMS

**Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster):** A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. That "exceptional situation" appears to be arising all across the country. The National Indian Brotherhood have identified vast areas where there is potential Minamata disease. In view of the fact that there have only been 48 examinations in this particular area of complaints, would the minister's department make some kind of massive examination of those people who are now living in areas which appear to be contaminated? In other words, when are we going to start doing something to prevent an epidemic of mercury poisoning in Canada?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I would not want the hon. member to spread panic among the people concerned. In each area involved, doctors regularly perform intensive tests. We have asked for the cooperation of the population everywhere there seems to be problems. Most of the times, we are dealing with a nomadic population which is hard to get in touch with, but all possible efforts are made, with the cooperation of the provincial governments, to contact the Indians concerned. All I can say to the hon. member is that we are trying our best to trace as soon as possible everyone

## Oral Questions

likely to carry this disease in order to take the measures to prevent the recurrence of such situations.

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[English]

## COMMUNICATIONS

## REQUEST FOR IMPROVEMENT IN TELEPHONE SYSTEM

**Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Communications. In view of the fact that on two occasions my office tried to reach my constituency but in fact reached Sydney, Australia, would the minister not agree that it would be cheaper to buy new equipment? If not, could she at least give us touch tone dialing so that we could get to Australia sooner?

**Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, I suffer from the same problem as the hon. member. You may be sure that I am doing all I can to get these people to get our phones to work.

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## HOUSING

ASSISTED HOME OWNERSHIP PLAN—REQUEST FOR REBATE OF  
SUBSIDY IN VIEW OF DELAY IN REGISTRATION OF HOMES

**Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** Mr. Speaker, may I direct my question to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, and let us hope that it will be short and sweet on this Friday the thirteenth. On February 6, I asked the minister whether he would look into the suggestion that a rebate of subsidy, given in view of the delay of registration of homes under the AHOP program, be looked into immediately. Has the minister had an opportunity to look into the situation and can he report to the House at this time?

**Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of State for Urban Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I am looking into the situation. I had hoped to have an answer today for the hon. member but it did not reach me in time for the question period. I am following up the matter, and I hope that I will have an answer for him on Monday.

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## ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

ALLEGATION TWELVE FORMER HONG KONG POLICEMEN  
SUSPECTED OF CORRUPTION RESIDING IN CANADA—REQUEST  
FOR REPORT

**Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra):** Mr. Speaker, may I direct my question to the Solicitor General. Has the Solicitor General knowledge of a report sent to the Minister of Justice in his capacity as member for Vancouver Centre, as well as to myself, that about 12 former Hong Kong policemen who fled Hong Kong in the face of an investigation by the independent commission against corruption have obtained official permission to enter Canada and are presently living in the Vancouver area? If the Solicitor General has not, would he consult with his colleagues the Minister