

*Oral Questions*

decision on information, on a fact, possibly even acting on an allegation. None of those were conveyed to me. And I don't have the ability of clairvoyance, which I have said earlier, to be able to make a decision if no information has been conveyed to me.

The question of procedures is valid. His Leader raised that yesterday. That is valid. But I think it has to be put in the context in which his Leader put it yesterday, rather than somehow a human being has to have the ability to make a decision or take an action without even being informed.

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**PUBLIC SERVICE**

## SALARIES OF REGISTERED NURSES

**Mr. David Daubney (Ottawa West):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. Some days ago I asked him about the unacceptable results of a decision of the Canadian Human Rights Commission which has meant that registered nurses working for the federal Government are in fact earning less than the nursing assistants who work for them.

I wonder if the Minister can advise the House of any progress in resolving this inequitable situation.

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and President of the Treasury Board):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the Hon. Member's continuing interest in this matter. As I pointed out to him at the time he raised it, there had been a number of discussions and negotiations between the Treasury Board officials and the officials of the Professional Institute of the Public Service. I am pleased to report that, as of Tuesday, I believe this Tuesday, a tentative agreement was reached, and it is subject to ratification. Judging from the atmosphere during those negotiations, I am hopeful and optimistic that it will be ratified in a very satisfactory manner.

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**HEALTH**

## TOXIC MUSSELS—MINISTER'S KNOWLEDGE OF TEST RESULTS

**Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

He knows, Mr. Speaker, that knowledge of this incident is crucial, and equally so if the Minister was not aware of certain facts. That too is a very serious allegation in view of the circumstances.

I want to ask the Minister to clarify for the House, is he saying that he knew on that Friday, November 27, that after

testing here in Ottawa, and after testing in Blacks Harbour, New Brunswick, where six out of six mice died from this toxin, 100 per cent, not 50, not 40, but 100 per cent—that the Minister knew of this information and did not act to inform Canadian consumers? Would he answer that question?

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I have answered it many, many times. I answer it again in the negative just as I have done many, many times.

## REQUEST FOR PUBLIC INQUIRY

**Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. I say to the Prime Minister, and I ask the Prime Minister, that this is one of the worst forms of incompetence and gross negligence by a federal Minister—

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Member may well have that opinion, but I am sure that he would want to set the facts out, or the alleged facts, upon which he bases his question. The Hon. Member.

● (1200)

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the Prime Minister if he will not call for the resignation of his Minister of National Health and Welfare. If he is not prepared to do that, in view of the fact of glaring, obvious information, would he not now appoint a public inquiry or a judicial inquiry into the seriousness of a situation which has caused the death of one Canadian, sickness among many, many, and the ruination of an industry?

**Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, in terms of the information, the Hon. Member can be referred again to the information that was given by the Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Protection Branch. He was asked the question: "What is the process for notifying the Minister when something like this is going on?"

"In the vast majority of cases, as you perhaps know from the briefing that we have had, the Minister is not involved at all simply because either the problem is contained, a manufacturer agrees that he has a problem, agrees to withdraw the material, and the likelihood of more illness or whatever is somehow or other resolved. If there are other situations where we cannot withdraw it or there is material that is left with a consumer, those are the instances where we want to go public and alert the consumer and try and use the media as a means of distributing a message, a health alert. Those instances are the ones where the Minister is involved in an 'operational' sort of sense. The Minister is apprised of aggravated investigations that we carry out".

That is exactly what happened. I acted exactly on that basis. If we can improve the procedures, obviously we will do it.