

Oral Questions

Mr. Berger: When dealing with the problem which this committee describes as having the potential of becoming a national catastrophe, how can the Minister justify several years of little or no action? How can he justify committing such meagre resources when we are talking about the most pressing public health problem of the 1980s?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, again this has to be put in context. The Royal Society's report is one that I commissioned. We spent \$250,000 on the report, so to characterize the report as showing that in some way the Government did not care about AIDS nor did not want information about AIDS is not the case.

I am obviously aware of the committee report. It was at that time that the Government came forward with a five-year plan, and \$39 million which has been mentioned as well.

Yes, we have to spend more money and I have said that publicly. There has been public education through the Canadian Public Health Association and the Emergency Drug Protocol. We have sent out over 2,500 copies of this, and anyone can look at what has been done here. Comparing what emergency drugs are available in the United States, for example, with those available in Canada, we rate well there.

I do not think that those are the issues. Yes, the Government must move further, but I think the issue we must deal with is that of education. Canadians must take personal responsibility about AIDS. They must accept the message of the Government and of health care workers, which is that they can protect themselves against AIDS if they take certain personal actions. I think that message as well should be put into this mix, and the Government has done that.

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MINES AND MINING**DECOMMISSIONING OF MADAWASKA MINE MILL SITE NEAR BANCROFT, ONT.**

Mr. Bill Vankoughnet (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State responsible for forestry and mines. The decommissioning of the Madawaska Mine mill site near Bancroft may end as early as November of 1988. Can the Minister tell the House which level or agency of government will be responsible for any subsequent remedial work and monitoring of this site?

The decommissioning of the Madawaska Mine mill site does not include all of the tailing ponds, nor does it seem to include the Greyhawk properties east of Highway 28. Local residents ask why these properties are excluded, what will happen to them in the future, and which levels of government will be responsible.

Hon. Gerald S. Merrithew (Minister of State (Forestry and Mines): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Hastings—

Frontenac—Lennox and Addington is absolutely correct. There has been a request of AECB to decommission that particular site by November 30. I might mention that our regulatory agency handling issues of this nature does set conditions. We have negotiated with the province concerned and in fact with all provinces on this matter, and there is a proposal before the Ontario Government with a proposed MOU regarding that particular site and others around it.

Discussions are taking place now. The Hon. Member can be assured that we have inspected those sites personally and that we will actively pursue this particular issue.

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HEALTH**AIDS DISEASE—PUBLIC EDUCATION**

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my question, which is directed to the Prime Minister, also concerns the question of AIDS. We agree with the Minister that the major issue is education.

The advice of the Royal Society was: "In the absence of an effective vaccine or treatment, educating the public about the nature of the disease must be the mainstay of efforts to retard the spread of the AIDS epidemic". Two weeks ago the Prime Minister said that this is a most important societal problem, one deserving urgent action and the urgent devotion of national resources.

Since the Canadian Government spends only \$750,000 on public education as compared to Australia which spends \$50 million, and since the Royal Society recommends a total of \$80 million to be spent, will the Prime Minister approve a major and immediate increase in AIDS education funding?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the core of the Hon. Member's question is that more education is needed, especially in the absence of a vaccine or a cure for AIDS. That is absolutely correct and I think we all agree on that. In respect to increased financing, I think I have been quite clear on the record on that as well.

I do not want to quibble, but if the Hon. Member were to look at those figures she used, she would find that they are not accurate relative to the other countries. I have those figures. I will not take the time of the House now, but suffice it to say—

Mr. Riis: Go ahead.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Australia spends more. Of the total program, this year Australia is spending \$20 million. Canada is spending eight, plus what the provinces are spending and the MRC and public health. There is no question that we have to spend more, but I think that the comparisons were not quite accurate.