

Oral Questions

We are well along in that process and hopefully we will have some announcements made as quickly as we can so that producers know there is assistance coming. That will be of some assistance to them in meeting their financial commitments this fall.

I should also say that we anticipate a very large payment under crop insurance, likely to be close to \$1 billion. There will also be some payments available under the Western Grain Stabilization Fund for the western part of the country.

Mr. Broadbent: What is the total, Michael? What does it add up to?

Mr. Mayer: We are looking to do what we can for other areas, especially Ontario, that are affected by the lack of production this summer as well.

Mr. Speaker: This will be the last question. The Hon. Member for Hamilton East.

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HEALTH

HEMOPHILIACS WITH AIDS VIRUS

Ms. Sheila Coppins (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Six weeks ago the Minister met with the Canadian Hemophilia Society with respect to its proposal for a compensation package to assist the 1,000 Canadian hemophiliacs who tested positive for the AIDS virus. Given that we are expecting an election call very shortly, probably within the next few minutes or the next hour—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Coppins: —I would like to ask the Minister if he could—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): You're two days late.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member.

Ms. Coppins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister whether he will commit today in the House before the dissolution to a compensation package for hemophiliacs who have contracted the AIDS virus as a result of deficient government blood supplies.

Mr. Tobin: It is a serious question. It needs a serious answer.

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the preamble of the Hon. Member, if she knows something about leaving ships and

stories about people leaving ships, of course she will have to address that.

I met with the Hemophiliac Society on August 15. We have had discussions. That was not the first. It gave us a proposal but I am not going to be making an announcement today or in the immediate days ahead.

Mr. Speaker: A short supplementary. The Hon. Member for Hamilton East.

BLOOD SUPPLY—COMPENSATION QUERY

Ms. Sheila Coppins (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, what I think we have here is a national tragedy. We have a national tragedy where 50 per cent of patients with hemophilia have received the AIDS virus as a result of tainted blood supply which was under the direction of the Government. I do not expect the Minister to announce a dollar figure today in the House. I do expect him to endorse the principle of compensation for the 50 per cent of hemophiliac victims who are currently facing an uncertain future because they have contracted the AIDS virus. Will the Minister commit today to the principle of compensation for those hemophiliac victims?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, what should be mentioned to the House and to those I have met with, with respect to the Hemophiliac Society—the first point that has to be made, I think, is that some of the statements the Hon. Member makes are probably made for political rhetoric rather than for health reasons.

Mr. Tobin: Come on, Jake!

Ms. Coppins: Sit down!

Mr. Epp (Provencher): I mean that, because when the Member talks about trying to tie in government with irresponsibility, that has simply not been the case. This has been an international situation. Blood products up to the fall of 1985 were not heat treated and that was not only a Canadian situation, that was as the AIDS issue developed. This Government then insisted that all product be heat treated. Even today, within medical circles there is a question of whether we should go from one method of heat treatment to another.

Second, blood products coming into Canada, or Canadian products, are under the control of the Canadian Blood Committee which is a committee of federal and provincial members—

Ms. Coppins: Under your direction.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): —appointed by both provincial and federal Governments. So this Government took action as early or earlier than other countries.

With respect to the principle of compensation, as was my first answer today, I cannot give a commitment as this time.