

*Oral Questions*

morning, but details were very few. I will become involved in this matter as soon as I can, to see whether something can be done from the point of view of the federal government.

**Mr. Towers:** Madam Speaker, could we have the assurance of the minister that this will be done today, in that it is my understanding a two-day delay in taking action will result in the backing-up of grain on the west coast, creating problems in movement and increasing the cost of farm operations?

**Mr. Pepin:** Madam Speaker, within the limitations of my powers I will make sure that we become fully informed on that matter this afternoon.

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**HEALTH AND WELFARE****SAFETY OF CERTAIN PESTICIDES—GENERIC AND TRADE NAMES OF CHEMICALS INVOLVED**

**Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East):** Madam Speaker, I wish to address a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare concerning the Industrial Biotest Laboratories' results and I wish to assure her that I, also, am not interested in unduly alarming Canadians. However, I am concerned that Canadians are not being told everything about the safety of certain pesticides.

The Saskatchewan minister for the environment is quoted as saying there was nothing substantially new in the letter he received from the minister. Could the minister inform the House if and when she will make public the generic names of the chemicals involved and the trade name of any product they might be found in, and will the minister assure us that the list of chemicals she released in her press release outlined exactly the same chemicals the United States government acknowledged are the ones under question?

[Translation]

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Madam Speaker, I do not want to act as a scientific expert but it seems to me that if the hon. member, for safety purposes, is asking for the generic names of a specific series of 97 pesticides whose tests have not been validated and on which we are now working, he is jumping to conclusions, because it would involve many other products whose proportion of constituents is not the same. I am not quite sure whether his question is acceptable. The House will understand why I would want to check with my officials to see whether that specific aspect of his question is acceptable.

He has not given me enough information. He refers to a letter to a minister. I am constantly in communication with them. I do not remember such a letter. I will check. I hope I have answered his question, to wit what additional information can be added to the letter.

[English]

**Mr. de Jong:** I have a supplementary question, Madam Speaker. In view of the extra concern, anxiety, money and time involved in allowing these chemicals on the Canadian market because we are dependent upon the results of laboratories which are foreign-owned, like IBT, will the minister assure us that she will impress upon her colleague in Treasury Board the need to approve the establishment in Canada of a public toxicology lab in order that Canadians will be assured that the chemicals they are using and eating are indeed safe, and in that way will not have to wait eight years before getting that assurance?

**Miss Bégin:** Madam Speaker, that second question nurtures Canadian nationalism which exists everywhere. At times that is good, and at times it is bad. The hon. member's suggestion seems to me to be a dream. I am sorry to be that blunt and that frank, but we have a population of 22 million or 23 million, not 230 million. In any case when we can benefit from the exchange of information between countries, particularly the United States, instead of duplicating services, I am in favour of it, especially when it provides us with information we cannot obtain in our country.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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**CANADA PENSION PLAN****INCREASE IN DISABILITY BENEFITS AND CORRESPONDING DECREASE IN PROVINCIAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE BENEFITS**

**Mr. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport):** Madam Speaker, I also have a question addressed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. It has to do with the despicable practice on the part of some provincial governments, notably Ontario, whereby every time disability benefits under the Canada Pension Plan are increased, there is a corresponding decrease in provincial social assistance benefits, thus cancelling any possibility for the people affected to keep up with inflation.

Will the minister inform this House whether she intends to raise this matter forcefully with her provincial counterparts in order that this gross injustice is brought to an end?

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Madam Speaker, I know of this unfortunate practice in several provinces. If my colleague refers to the \$35 increase which will not be fully passed on, I can assure him that I think we have reached the point where we must put that matter on the agenda of the national conference on pensions so that it can be discussed in the open by all Canadians.

Unfortunately, this practice may become a deterrent in respect of future increases required to the GIS to take everyone out of the poverty level. As to those below 65, what happens when provinces unfortunately divert funds is that the lag, *l'écart* between people below 65 and over 65 is intolerable to Canadians.