



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

---

VOLUME 144 | NUMBER 065 | 2nd SESSION | 40th PARLIAMENT

---

**OFFICIAL REPORT (HANSARD)**

**Monday, June 1, 2009**

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

## **ORAL QUESTIONS**

### **Medical Isotopes**

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):**

Mr. Speaker, 5,000 procedures in Canada rely on medical isotopes every day but it appears that foreign suppliers could supply, at most, 2,000. This means that at least 3,000 procedures a day in Canada will not occur through June, July, August, who knows how long. Patients will be moved onto waiting lists that are already too long for other types of tests and treatments that are not as good. This will put more stress on patients, families and medical professionals.

How could the government have failed to see this coming?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, Health Canada has provided advance warning and regular updates to the provinces and the territories and worked with the isotope experts to develop medical guidance on dealing with the shortage, including examining other possible isotopes. Many tests can be completed using other options. What this means for Canadians is that we are making alternatives available so that medical isotopes can be used where most needed.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):**

Mr. Speaker, she did not answer the question.

The minister announced last week that her department would assemble an expert panel to explore other ways to obtain isotopes for Canadians. While experts in nuclear medicine are calling the situation a disaster, the minister still has not chosen her panel.

Why did the government not seek such expert opinion 18 months ago? Why was it asleep at the switch?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, the member may be confused between the two processes, the one from last year and the one this year. Last year an expert panel discussed the issue. We learned from those lessons, which is why we are working with the globe in terms of dealing with the shortage in isotopes. In fact, I have a call scheduled for tomorrow morning with the other isotope producing countries in order to discuss maintenance schedules.

Finally, even though there is a great need to be catcalling to me as I try to talk about the important issue of medical isotopes, it is important to remember that we are--