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Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

ORAL QUESTIONS

Medical Isotopes

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

Mr. Speaker, Canadians are appalled at the isotope shortage and they have a lot of questions.

Can the government tell Canadians how much it will cost to buy isotopes on the international market? Will the government compensate the provinces for this additional cost?

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

Mr. Speaker, we are working closely with the provinces and territories, and the medical community who are implementing the contingency measures to manage the situation.

Our focus at this point is to increase timely access to the available supply of medical isotopes and alternatives. I am in regular conversations with my provincial and territorial counterparts on this issue.

Our government will continue to work in partnership with the provinces and the medical community to do what is best for Canadians

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

Mr. Speaker, these are straightforward questions and Canadians are entitled to straight answers.

So let us try again. Does the government expect to see a bidding war for the dwindling supply of global isotopes? Is it not reasonable to expect that most of the remaining supply of cancer testing isotopes is going to be soaked up by the U.S. market?

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

Mr. Speaker, as we indicated yesterday through our conversations with the United States, the Minister of Health is working with the distributors of generators.

We do know that next week we will have 50% of the supply that we normally have in isotopes here in Canada and that has been communicated to the medical community.

As well, as the hon. member knows because he has been on the committee, it is a very complex chain in which we have isotopes coming from global reactors into the Canadian marketplace. We are working with all the parties involved in that supply chain.