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**OFFICIAL REPORT (HANSARD)**

**Wednesday, June 17, 2009**

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

**Medical Isotopes**

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

Mr. Speaker, the former president of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission said yesterday that the MAPLE reactors could have been working and producing isotopes. She said that the government's decision to prematurely shut down the MAPLE reactors a year ago was shocking.

Why did the Conservatives abandon the MAPLE project, when the reactors were still being audited? Was it because producing isotopes did not fit into their privatization plans?

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

Mr. Speaker, the testimony of the former president of CNSC has actually turned up something else which I find very interesting. Indeed, she indicated to the *Globe and Mail*, not more than three weeks ago, that she was told that the MAPLEs had problems in 2001, which I presume she told the member for Wascana. As well, the quote was, "You know, we are going to be bringing out the cement machines to fill that in".

Now, is that something the member for Wascana actually knew about? If so, why did it take him so long to alert the world that Canada was not in a position to provide—

**The Speaker:**

Order. The hon. member for Halifax West.

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

Mr. Speaker, Canadians know the government refuses to explore every possible solution to the isotope crisis.

The government prematurely shut down the MAPLE reactors. It did not treat a proposal to create isotopes at McMaster University as a priority. It denied, for months, there was even a crisis. Then it made matters worse by announcing isotope production would die on its watch.

Why does the government believe Canadian cancer patients should be dependent on other countries for isotopes when it is clear we can be world leaders in this field?

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

Mr. Speaker, indeed, the one thing that the hon. member said that was, in fact, a fact is that we are world leaders.

We are absolutely world leaders in leading the globe in coming together to come up with contingency planning with respect to reactor schedules to ensure that we have a global supply of medical isotopes.

With respect to McMaster, this government has funded McMaster, both on the side of research with respect to the reactor as well as the infrastructure side of the reactor. Indeed, on May 28 of this year we announced an expert panel to review the call for proposals for alternate ways to produce medical isotopes for the long-term.