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Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health

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

Mr. Speaker, what a disgrace that the Prime Minister did not take the H1N1 flu problem seriously in the spring, that he failed to ensure that the vaccine would be available on time, before the crisis, which was entirely foreseeable, and that he failed to provide a serious vaccination plan to protect Canadian families.

What does he have to say to the thousands of Canadians who could not be vaccinated, despite many hours in long lineups?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the priority has been to ensure that we have a vaccine that is safe for Canadian families.

The priority has been that the vaccine be effective in combatting what is a significant public health issue. We have more than six million doses from coast to coast to coast which have already been released to our partners, the provinces and territories. Public health nurses in every corner of the province and country are working hard to ensure that they begin what is deemed to be the biggest mass inoculation in Canadian history.

We have put the politics aside and are working constructively with the provinces and territories. I think what Canadians expect is that all parties in the House will do the same.

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

Mr. Speaker, what Canadians expect are serious and real answers.

The White family in Bedford have four small children under the age of three, including triplets. The mom is an elementary school teacher. They tried to get vaccinated but the lack of government planning made this impossible. After standing in line for three hours, they packed their hungry, tired, cold kids into the van and headed home without getting vaccinated.

Could the health minister tell Mr. and Mrs. White and parents like them how they are supposed to protect their kids from the risk of H1N1, and why the government has failed them?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, we are seeing the biggest mass immunization in Canadian history. We obviously need thousands of public health nurses, the provinces and territories, and the Chief Public Health Officer. We cannot inoculate every single person in a matter of two or three days. Public health nurses are working literally around the clock on the inoculations. Our government is working to ensure that the vaccine is safe, effective and available.

I am pleased to report to the House that there are more doses of vaccine available today per capita in Canada than there are in any other country in the world.