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H1N1 Swine Flu Vaccination

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the first day of a mass vaccination against the spread of H1N1 -- Swine Flu -- in our Territory. Nationwide, this will be the largest mass vaccination and immunization program in Canadian history.

Like many parents, my wife and I find ourselves struggling over whether or not to give our two-year old son this H1N1 vaccine. We're even wondering, Mr. Speaker, whether or not we should get the shot ourselves.

I want to be clear that the Department of Health and Social Services is doing a great job at providing information about H1N1, and their website and public announcements have been good. I'm concerned over the fact that Health Canada is supplying the vaccine that our Minister of Health likes to refer to as the Cadillac version of a vaccine, to our residents and to the people of Canada. This vaccine, known as Arepanrix, contains such ingredients as formaldehyde and potassium chloride. Are we getting that information out to our residents?

Mr. Speaker, in the United States many parents are saying no to this vaccine. In China, over half the population says they don't want it and, indeed, there are many Canadians and residents here in our Territory that will say no to the vaccine. Mr. Speaker, I know that these vaccines are different, depending on which country you live in. For example, in Australia they were using a vaccine called Panvax. This vaccine does not contain formaldehyde, like Arepanrix does. So there certainly are differences.

Mr. Speaker, like any vaccine, there are side effects associated with Arepanrix. I would like to advise those residents that want to know more about the vaccine, to visit Health Canada's website for a product information leaflet on the Arepanrix vaccine. It certainly is enlightening.

It's certainly not my intention today to scare people away from getting the vaccine, and at the end of the day, when you weigh the odds and the fact that I couldn't stand to see my son become sick with H1N1, and hospitalized, he'll probably end up getting the vaccine.

Given the fact that getting this vaccine can, in rare cases, cause serious issues with the nervous system and paralysis, I'm wondering will those adversely affected have any legal recourse with the government. Do people receiving this vaccine have to sign a waiver, are people fully informed of the ingredients of this vaccine prior to it being administered, and are they asked about allergies, especially to eggs, Mr. Speaker? At the appropriate time I'll have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you.