

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CANOLA — SPILLAGE

567. Hon LYNN MacLAREN to the minister representing the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to the truck-trailer fire and spillage of 15 tonnes of genetically modified canola at Williams on 9 August.

- (1) Will the minister confirm that a number of growers in the Williams area market non-GM canola directly to Japan and requested last year that the area be designated a GM-free zone?
- (2) What recourse will there be for non-GM farmers in the area to recoup their lost income if their crops become contaminated and they lose export markets as a result of the spill?
- (3) What was the extent of the spill of GM canola seed along the roadway and verges?
- (4) Why do CBH and the Department of Agriculture and Food intend to monitor the site for only six to eight weeks, when studies have shown that canola seed can persist in the soil and remain viable for 10 years or more?
- (5) What was the extent of the clean-up and why was the highway reopened at 5.00 am the next day before the clean-up was completed?
- (6) What locations was the GM canola being transported between, and what was its intended use?

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Common law.
- (3) The truck was stationary. There was no wind or rain to disperse the grain from the original site. Water was used to extinguish the flames and this may have dispersed some seed in the near vicinity. This possibility was allowed for in the extent of the clean-up.
- (4) This period represents the time frame in which any existing seed may germinate. Seed germinated beyond that time frame will not persist or pose a constraint to choice of GM or non-GM production.
- (5) The clean-up was comprehensive. The grain was sucked up into a truck and taken to the CBH Narrakine receival site and the soil and gravel was removed from the roadside. The roadside on either side of the spill site will be sprayed with a suitable residual herbicide. The timing for the reopening of the highway was a decision made by Main Roads.
- (6) This is a commercial arrangement and is the business of CBH.