

Adjournment Debate

individual, the problem is that there is a buildup over the years. In that area and the area that the radioactivity could flow to through the aquifers and the river system, it could get to be a very serious problem in the future. We are sadly lacking in the precautions that have been put in place by this Government and by the Government of Saskatchewan. What is the federal Government willing to do in terms of recommendations for the cleanup of this particular spill and recommendations to assure that this will not happen in the future?

● (1810)

Mr. Denis Ethier (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the Province of Saskatchewan has jurisdiction under the Federal Fisheries Act which is administered by the Saskatchewan Department of Parks and Renewable Resources. The Atomic Energy Board has prime jurisdiction over all nuclear issues for the federal Government. Environment Canada acts as an advisor to the Atomic Energy Control Board on all environmental matters. This is facilitated under a memorandum of understanding between the Board and Environment Canada.

The spill at the Key Lake uranium mine in Saskatchewan, which occurred early on January 5, 1984, and continued until the morning of January 7, 1984, was the result of human error. Workers left a pump running which caused an overflow of the dike. Once the overflow started the dike rapidly eroded resulting in about 100 million litres of radium contaminated water being lost. Spill response personnel from the Saskatchewan Department of Environment were on the scene shortly after the spill was reported and collected samples as the spill was occurring. Shortly after learning of the spill a specialist

from Environment Canada was sent to the mine to survey the situation.

The concentration of radium 226 in the spill has been determined to be about 11 becquerels per litre. There are no radiation hazards to workers. The immediate environmental impact is small due to dilution effects—probably to drinking water levels—natural ground water inflow and the absence of any commercial or sports fishery.

Due to Environment Canada's concern about this accident two departmental officials are at the mine collecting water, ice and sediment samples to determine the impact of the spill on the environment. This work complements work currently underway by the Saskatchewan Department of Environment and by the company. Long term actions will be taken based on the results of this sampling.

Officials of the Environmental Protection Service have inspected the spill with Atomic Energy Control Board personnel and held discussions with the company and with the Province. The company has received approval from the Atomic Energy Control Board to make repairs to existing structures and to put forward proposals for the clean up of spills that escaped to the environment. One suggested clean up proposal is to pump the contaminated water to the mill, treat it, and then release it to the environment. The Environmental Protection Service will be reviewing these proposals for the Atomic Energy Control Board.

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

At 6.14 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.