

[Translation]

Far be it from me to try to minimize the situation in Paint Hills. However, to set the facts straight, I think I should inform the hon. member that, contrary to what he said in the House on May 18 of this year, the gastroenteritis epidemic which spread through Paint Hills in 1980 did not result in any deaths. A report on the epidemic prepared by Dr. Gary Pekeles in March, 1981, indicates that the number of cases of gastroenteritis in Paint Hills in the spring and summer of 1980 was not any higher than usual.

[English]

The hon. member made reference on May 19 to an apparent conflict between information contained in the minister's letter of March 19, 1982, and water tests conducted on March 9. The March 19 letter to Chief Hughboy of Paint Hills indicated that there did not appear to be any serious water quality problem at that time.

● (2225)

The March 9 test results, however, indicate a serious contamination problem. The fact is that when the minister wrote the letter on March 19, department officials had not yet been notified of the test results. In fact, correspondence from Chief Hughboy indicates that he himself did not receive an official "Notice to Boil" letter until March 19.

Last year, in an attempt to improve general health conditions in the community, a remedial measures program was put

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in place. I would like to point out that this program was designed and implemented by the Cree themselves with advice from DIAND. It included covering the spring used for drinking water, fitting it with a pump, instituting door-to-door water delivery in safe containers, and a general community clean-up. During 1981-82 our department spent \$217,774 in funding this program. It is continuing this year and the department is working with the Cree to resolve the problem.

Although the program has improved conditions somewhat, it is clear that a very serious problem still exists and that the only long-term solution is the construction of permanent infrastructure facilities. A funding proposal for a total water and sewer system has been prepared by my department which will be seeking Treasury Board approval very shortly. The regional director and Chief Hughboy have met here in Ottawa to accelerate approval and construction.

[Translation]

New measures resulting from a study of the James Bay agreement now being considered by cabinet could also be expected to improve the situation very shortly.

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at two o'clock.

At 10.27 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.