

Oral Questions

To answer his question, I will be discussing this matter with Premier Harcourt hopefully in the next day or two to tell him just what is the position of the Government of Canada. However, the background should indicate the room within which we had to act.

• (1450)

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, we thank the minister for his little history lesson. The people of northern B.C. are all too familiar with what this bad deal signed by this government has done to the Nechako River in northern British Columbia.

I thank the minister for telling the House that he is meeting with the premier. Should the public inquiry clearly show a need to change the settlement agreement of 1987, is the government prepared to reopen that settlement agreement to assist the environmental assessment that should have been done in the first place?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, there was an environmental assessment done on this project in the first place. There was an independent review committee appointed, headed by the then president of the University of British Columbia.

With reference to the agreement, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans was satisfied with respect to matters that affected fisheries and fisheries habitat. The courts of Canada have now dealt with the issue. The matter is settled in so far as any petitioners to the courts are concerned. Unless the other parties to the agreement all agree that there should be some change to the agreement, it is not an issue which the Government of Canada has to decide nor should it decide.

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DAVIS INLET

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare or whoever is representing him today.

The department has agreed to fly 60 Innu to Alberta for treatment. Peter Penashue of the Innu Nation said: "We are accepting the lesser evil because there is no treatment centre to deal with our people in our language".

Last Thursday the minister told me in the House that he would listen to the Innu people and accept their proposals. He has not accepted their proposals.

Why has he not accepted their proposals? Will he commit the funds for a treatment centre for the Innu near Davis Inlet in Labrador?

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the 14 youngsters who were involved in that very tragic situation 10 to 12 days ago, there was an agreement reached on the weekend for their immediate treatment.

The families of the 14 youngsters, the Innu, the province of Newfoundland and the Minister of National Health and Welfare have agreed that they would travel to a healing centre north of Edmonton. The families and the translators will be taken along.

The long-term solution for a health care facility at Davis Inlet is under review. We are dealing with the Innu people. My colleague, the minister of Indian affairs will be looking at all the issues, whether these are mobile or permanent. Everything is on the table and will be reviewed.

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the minister of Indian affairs or whoever is representing him today.

There is now an urgent need for a new community for Davis Inlet. The question of jurisdiction must be settled and the Government of Canada must accept it. However, there is a need now for providing the funds for construction this summer.

Will the minister or his representative take the responsibility and the lead to make sure that plans are put in place for a new community this summer?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre H. Vincent (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. I think all parliamentarians will agree this is a very important matter. Last Friday, there was an important meeting with officials from my department, National Health and Welfare, people from the community and representatives of the provincial government. Certain requests were made by the community, and we are now examining all this to make sure that as far as the needs and demands of the community are concerned, our response is appropriate and valid, not only in the short term but in the long term as well for this community.