

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

HEALTH

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise and raise again the issues which I brought up in this House on November 19, 1991, and that had to do with the outbreak of tuberculosis in the communities along Lake Athabaska and Walliston Lake in Saskatchewan, particularly the community of Black Lake.

At that time, in November, there was a massive public outcry including programs on national television and in the national media drawing the attention of the nation to what was happening in Black Lake and the totally unacceptable rates of tuberculosis that existed there. In late January I had the opportunity to tour those communities personally and see for myself again what was happening with respect to health.

• (1800)

I saw that the control program was working. It was quite obvious that the Health and Welfare officials assigned to the task were doing more than yeoman service. They were being very creative in working with the resources they had.

As well, the people in those communities who were contracted by Health and Welfare to help with the control program have also done an excellent job in making sure that people take their medicine, go to the doctor and make sure that health education is taking place around this disease.

Just this last Friday I had the opportunity to hear the Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs address the constitutional convention banquet. As a member of Parliament, I was proud to associate myself with the remarks of the minister at that banquet.

At that banquet he said: "Look what the policies of governments past have brought this country and its aboriginal peoples". He said and I quote: "Infant mortality that is double the national average, suicide that is twice as common and a rate of tuberculosis that is 10 times higher". We have recognition here by the minister

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and the Government of Canada before the aboriginal people that this rate of tuberculosis is unacceptable, especially in the context of the nation-building we are trying to engage in at the present time.

I would like to point out that the problem is not with the control program or the professionals. Besides TB in those communities there is hepatitis A and dysentery, all problems that indicate very clearly that we have a public health program that goes far beyond tuberculosis.

The basics are clear. There has to be clean water, workable sewer systems to keep those communities sanitary. There has to be a housing program that contributes to adequate housing. The minister challenged my statements at that time on housing. It is true that there are up to 15 people living in a 900 square foot house in those communities on Lake Athabaska. That is not a healthy situation.

I am calling on the government to take action, to build a road into the Athabaska so that those houses and sewer and water materials and healthy food can get in there and that the government put its money where its mouth is in this regard.

[Translation]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for External Relations and Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, we are very much aware of the housing conditions that exist on Indian reserves across the country. In recent years, the Department of Indian Affairs has provided over \$120 million annually in capital subsidies to assist with house construction and renovations in First Nations' communities. Last year, for example, the department provided \$130 million toward the construction of over 3,500 new houses and the renovation of 4,600 existing units; indeed, the average rate of construction and renovation over the past eight years has been in the area of 3,200 new houses and 4,000 renovations per year.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has also provided additional operating subsidies to bands that have borrowed from approved lenders to build their houses. Because reserve lands cannot be mortgaged, Indian Affairs provided guarantees for housing loans. Since 1984, the First Nations have made much greater use of CMHC funding, and Indian Affairs now approves between \$75 million and \$100 million in loan guarantees annually.