operators. People and communities who are burdened with this waste have a real problem. Like the nuclear industry, they are the victims of perceptions.

Several thousand tons of low-level waste is produced in Canada each year under licence by utilities, fuel fabrication plants, hospitals, laboratories and so on. This waste is safely stored either by the producers or by Atomic Energy of Canada Limited at its Chalk River site.

Various kinds of disposal facilities for low-level waste will be required, depending on the level and type of radioactivity they contain. Land fill will take care of much of the soil. Engineered shallow burial may be needed for the more concentrated wastes. The engineered sites will probably require thorough environmental assessments, public hearings and AECB licences.

A new office was set up within AECL last year to carry out federal operational responsibilities in this area. We are close to agreement with the provinces on jurisdictional responsibilities, and we are working closely with them to resolve the historic waste problems. We have reached an agreement with Ontario on the Malvern wastes and I hope that they can be moved soon. We are co-operating with the Government of British Columbia on the wastes at Surrey, B.C. and I am hopeful that a solution can be found there are well fairly quickly.

The third area is uranium mine tailings. There are about 120 million tons of uranium mine tailings in Canada, representing about 2 per cent of all mine tailings. Most of this material is in tailings licensed by the Atomic Energy Control Board. Some of it is from mines that were abandoned 20 years ago, before the present regulatory regime was in effect. While these older tailings present no significant risk to public health and safety, some remedial action may be required. Production under AECB licences continues at a rate of about 10 million tons per year.

A research program was established in 1982 to be managed by CANMET within EMR which will look into the long-term behaviour of the uranium tailings and the possible need for remedial measures beyond the current practice so that the tailings can be considered effectively disposed of after they are closed out. We hope to begin discussion with the provinces soon about the question of ultimate responsibility. Because of the large volumes of the tailings, remedial actions, if they are required, will most likely involve *in situ* treatment. However, each site will require specific consideration.

The level of radioactivity in the tailings is higher than the normal background level in most soils and rocks. The tailings also emit radon gas at higher rates than is emitted from normal soils and rocks. However, the presence of the tailings cannot be distinguished above background radon levels at distances more than a few hundred metres from the tailings' boundary. Despite their large volume, uranium tailings comprise only about 2 per cent of the total mine tailings in Canada.

• (1710)

In terms of environmental impact, they have much in common with tailings from other mines, for instance potential acid seepage, which does occur with uranium tailings but also does with a lot of other mineral tailings. I hope that this short review will show that the federal Government has taken initiatives in each of the areas of radioactive waste management, and that it is working hard in co-operation with the provinces to resolve the outstanding problems.

We are on the way to solving problems and we are doing it with great care and with absolute scientific precision. Step by step we will get the solution and we will do it in a way that is scientifically defensible.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, first I want to commend the Hon. Member on his analysis. I do not necessarily think that we are going quickly enough and far enough. But I doubt very much if anyone would disagree, as a result of the debate that has been going on today—in spite of what was said by the Hon. Member for Oxford who thought we ought to be spending our time doing something else—that this is an important issue. This is an issue that has to be faced up to and dealt with. How one deals with the distribution or the ultimate disposal of radioactive waste continues to be and has been a problem of some major consideration right around the world. When we look at what has happened in Saskatchewan, at Douglas Point and at Pickering of late and at our inability for one reason or another to come to grips with what could be very serious problems, I do not think it is unreasonable to suggest that to spend one day in the House of Commons out of the full year talking about it is a day reasonably well spent.

I note, however, the hour. In the interests of allowing the debate to continue I wonder if I might be allowed to move, under Standing Order 8(4)(a), seconded by the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis):

That the House continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the purpose of continuing consideration of the supply motion being debated today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): I doubt that this motion would be receivable since today is not an ordinary day of proceedings. We are debating an Opposition motion. I will take the matter under advisement for a few minutes. Meanwhile the House will continue with the question period.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, if you will allow me—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): I will take the matter under advisement.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): I will hear the point of order.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, you understand the consequences of taking the matter under advisement. You are now giving the Government the opportunity to lug in its 25 members in order