

*Adjournment Debate*ENERGY—REMOVAL OF ONTARIO RADIOACTIVE WASTE. (B)  
RESPONSIBILITY FOR PERMANENT STORAGE

**Mr. John Gamble (York North):** Mr. Speaker, on May 25, 1984, after waiting for three weeks for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Chrétien) to appear in this House during question period, and finding that he did not, I raised a question with the Minister responding for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. That question related to the transportation of some 4,000 tons of low level radioactive waste from the Malvern subdivision in Scarborough to a location in the City of Scarborough on Reesor Road very close to the border of my riding of York-North, the intended sight being a few hundred yards from Steeles Avenue which separates the Town of Markham and the City of Scarborough.

I am rather surprised that the Liberal MP for that area has not taken a more active part in protecting the interest of his constituents, for what we are concerned with here is the relocation of some 4,000 tons of material which contain radium 226 in quantities which are from 20 to 280 times the normal level of that material in natural deposits in the Toronto area.

• (1820)

In addition, the material which is about to be transported contains substantial contaminations of arsenic. It is intended by the federal Government, which has under the terms of the agreement with the Province of Ontario dated November 3, 1983, acknowledged its responsibility for the permanent storage of the material, to locate this very substantial quantity of contaminated material on about two acres of land near the little Rouge River. The material is to be placed in a large plastic bag or a large plastic wrapper on the surface of the ground which geologically consists of sand and gravel-sand substance. This will permit the leeching of the contaminants from this material into the Rouge River system.

The people in that area, some of whom live as close as 1,000 yards to the intended site, obviously will be subject to this contamination. Radium 226 in its decomposed form becomes radon 222, a known carcinogenic gas which will produce lung disease and other lung ailments of the cancerous nature in human beings. It is absolutely astounding that with the available evidence the Government still proposes temporarily to transport but a few miles to where it will be located some material which is dangerous to human beings, and to store that material on a ground level site near a river—the people in the area derive their water supply from wells—and cover it with a plastic bag, with no more concern for the general public in the area than is disclosed by its conduct here.

Fortunately a group of citizens retained the services of a firm of solicitors and have commenced an action in the Federal Court of Canada. They apparently have obtained an interim injunction precluding the movement of this soil in the fashion the federal Government would contemplate.

My concern is very simply this. Recognizing, with the abundance of material filed in that court action, the dangerous nature of the material—and indeed, had it not been dangerous,

the federal Government would never have agreed to remove it from its existing site—how could the Government ever contemplate storing it on that site in that fashion?

When I asked the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde), answering for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about the issue, he said that a number of Conservatives had opposed the storage of the material in some other location. Atomic Energy of Canada is in the process of producing and licensing the use of radioactive materials in Canada. There has to be some place where that material can be stored. If the federal Government cannot find a suitable location for low level radioactive waste, what in the name of heaven will it do with the uranium bundles at hydro projects? Where will they be stored? It is very clearly time that the Government awakened to its responsibilities and stored this material where it will not result in injury to the inhabitants of the immediate area.

• (1825)

**Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources):** Mr. Speaker, the work to date of the Low Level Radioactive Waste Management Office has concentrated on the cleanup of historic wastes in Malvern and Port Hope, Ontario and in Surrey, B.C. I would like to specifically address the Malvern case.

About 4,000 tonnes of slightly radioactively contaminated soil, for which no permanent disposal site exists, is currently located on residential properties in the Malvern subdivision of Scarborough. In 1983, the Canadian and Ontario Governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding under which the federal Government assumed responsibility for removing the soil to permanent disposal when a disposal site could be established. Ontario, preferring that the removal of the soil from Malvern take place without waiting for the establishment of a disposal site, agreed to co-operate with the federal Government by identifying a temporary storage site for the soil, and agreed to incur the additional costs involved in taking the additional step through storage prior to going to disposal.

The Hon. Member has made an attempt to dump the whole problem on the federal Government. I must remind him that the provincial governments have a very great responsibility in this particular field. Indeed, there was a lot of opposition to the disposal site that was selected. I think the Hon. Member is well aware of those Conservatives who opposed that, along with the general public.

The federal Government, with Ontario's agreement, named the Low Level Radioactive Waste Management Office of AECL as the agency to carry out the work. The Malvern removal has been delayed because of an interim court injunction obtained by a group of residents near the temporary storage site.

The federal Government is now actively addressing all aspects of the management and disposal of radioactive wastes in Canada. It has been doing that for some time. The Hon. Member must be very much aware that this is a very emotional topic for the general public. It is very difficult to find a satisfactory site. Much work remains before a complete oper-