

OMEX SITE, REMEDIATION COSTS

384. Hon JIM SCOTT to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage:

- (1) Is the minister aware that recent Department of Environmental Protection water and catchment protection tests at the Omex site in Bellevue have revealed significant re-contamination of ground water at the site with hydrocarbons?
- (2) Will this newly discovered contamination affect the Government's current plans to sell the site as residential lots; if yes, will the minister please detail them?
- (3) Does the minister accept that the remediation of the Omex site has failed in its primary objective to remove the risk to the environment - that is, ground water - and if not, why not?
- (4) The Auditor General's report No 6 of November 2002 on contaminated sites indicates that the Omex remediation cost \$7 million to complete. Can the minister confirm that the real remediation cost was around \$10 million?
- (5) Why has the Department of Environmental Protection inaccurately reported the true cost of the Omex remediation to the Auditor General?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

On behalf of the minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The August 2002 ground water results showed that all substances tested, with the exception of total petroleum hydrocarbons, were below the water quality guidelines prescribed in the ground water management plan. Total petroleum hydrocarbons were elevated; however, given that ground water is used for domestic irrigation purposes only, the Department of Health does not consider that these exceedances constitute a health risk. Total petroleum hydrocarbon concentrations in three of the 16 bores tested appear to have increased since December 2001. Further monitoring is required to confirm these trends.
- (2) Given that memorials on certificates of title for the residential lots will document the residual ground water contamination and prohibit the abstraction of ground water, the current ground water quality will not affect the sale of the lots.
- (3) The primary source of contamination was successfully removed during the remediation of the site. One of the objectives of the Omex ground water management plan is to monitor the movement and concentration of contaminants emanating from the Omex site and to ensure that the containment barrier at the site continues to be effective in isolating the most grossly contaminated ground water. These objectives are being met. As with any contaminated site, ongoing ground water monitoring is required to confirm increasing or decreasing trends.
- (4) In late 1997 an allocation of \$6.9 million in funding was made to remediate the Omex contaminated site. The Omex remediation project was undertaken between 1997 and 2001 and cost \$7.65 million to complete. This figure includes \$830 000 for purchase of the land and LandCorp costs. The financial records for this project were provided to the Auditor General. The Auditor General has advised that figures reported are estimates only.
- (5) The Department of Environmental Protection has not inaccurately reported the cost of the Omex project to the Auditor General.