

Urea Formaldehyde Insulation Act

organizations who have banded together because of the fact that they have urea formaldehyde in their houses. I am sure the hon. member did not mean that. I have met with these people for many, many months. I know that many other members of the Conservative Party have also done that. I spent all last Sunday afternoon—two days ago—with representatives of groups in my city.

I am sure the hon. member got a little carried away but would not intentionally want to leave the impression that he really believes members of the Conservative Party have ignored this matter or have not been listening to constituents who have come to them, because that is just not the case.

Mr. Hovdebo: Mr. Speaker, I recognize the fact that urea formaldehyde home owners have visited many members of the Conservative Party. I did not intend to say that those members did not see them. What I mean is that after seeing them, members of the Conservative Party did not come forward with the kind of pressure which was necessary to change the mind of this government. I apologize if I left the impression the hon. member mentioned.

This bill has a cut-off date which would disqualify as many as 60,000 people from taking advantage of the program. The bill makes no provision for a long-term medical follow-up. Regardless of what the hon. member for Hamilton West says, most doctors in the country recognize the dangers and possible long-term effects of living in a home insulated with urea formaldehyde.

● (1640)

The bill requires that only one payment be made. There is no allowance for commitments in the future, regardless of the findings of the committee. These are real problems and they need real answers.

We in this party think the government can do a lot better in providing assistance to UFFI victims. That is why my colleagues and I are bringing to light the injustices contained in this bill. The government must deal with them as quickly as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Roy (Laval): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak at this stage of the proceedings on this very important bill. I think we shall finally reach today that decisive moment we have all been looking forward to for so many months. If Bill C-109 is passed today on third reading, we shall be releasing total funds of \$110 million for use by UFFI victims. I think that is the correct figure, and I am grateful to all the members of this House for their unanimous consent, so that UFFI victims will no longer be penalized. Mr. Speaker, I was impressed with the speech of our Liberal member who discussed the scientific aspect of the matter, since he himself is an expert in the field, namely Dr. Hudecki. He clearly explained the scientific side and showed us how complex the problem really is. We were aware of the fact, but just the

same, I want to appeal to all the members of this House to refrain from playing politics with this question, because it is an excessively complex issue and since it is a scientific problem, we have had to obtain technical data and we have had consultations with various groups. Obviously, before establishing a policy worth \$110 million, as a responsible government we had to proceed with a serious analysis, including samples taken from numerous homes, not necessarily in order to reach a final decision but at least to finish the debate in Parliament and enable the people who need assistance to benefit from the \$5,000 government grants earmarked for UFFI victims.

With your leave, Mr. Speaker, I shall go over the past history of this product which has aroused considerable concern here in Canada. However, I shall not go beyond the historical confines of the problem, unlike the member who spoke before me, the member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo), who tied this question in with the unemployment situation and interest rates, blaming the government for all our ills. Instead, during the time I have been allotted I shall go over exactly what has happened since the official announcement under the Canadian Home Insulation Program.

What happened to the program? The CHIP program was announced in 1977 and its purpose was to improve insulation in Canadian homes. I may refer the member for Prince Albert, who was talking about housing conditions in Canada, to the results of several surveys that were published. In fact, regarding satisfaction of Canadians with the quality of housing in Canada, as measured by a survey that was held about two years ago, I previously mentioned this item in the House, when I said that nearly 85 per cent of Canadians were satisfied with housing conditions in Canada. I think it is hard to find countries where the rate of satisfaction with the quality of housing is as high as that. Then, in 1977, as we all know, the Canadian government announced a special Canadian home insulation program, aimed at cutting down on oil consumption, at a time when prices were rising fast. It is clear now that five years ago, the government was being extremely provident, because we know how much home heating oil costs now. At that time, the government set up a home insulation program.

Specifications were set by the Canadian General Standards Board, and some 100 products were suggested or recommended by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for use as insulation. The 100 products suggested or recommended included urea formaldehyde foam. What is the Canadian General Standards Board? Is it a purely governmental organization? Is it a private organization? Not at all! I think that for the benefit of hon. members and the public, I should explain what the Canadian General Standards Board is. It is a committee on which consumers are represented. It also includes members of private industry and representatives of provincial governments. It is a committee that includes, as I have just said, the private sector, various professions and members of the Canadian government. It was this specifications committee