

*Adjournment Debate*

## EMERGENCY MEASURES

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today during today's adjournment debate to speak on an issue which is of great importance.

On October 18 of last year, one day after the devastating San Francisco earthquake, I rose in the House to ask the Minister of National Defence about the government's lack of support for programs relating to emergency preparedness. The Minister of National Defence is the lead minister responsible for emergency preparedness and I regret to say that I was less than satisfied with his response. I appreciate the opportunity to further discuss this issue as several months have now passed. I would hate to think that the government has forgotten this whole issue.

As the House knows, this government made severe cuts to the earthquake prediction research program of Energy, Mines and Resources. It is indeed unfortunate as Canada is susceptible to earthquakes. Near Newfoundland, Yukon and Baffin Islands, high risk zones exist. As well, Vancouver Island and the lower mainland of British Columbia, where my riding is, are also at high risk. There is a high population density in these latter regions. If a serious earthquake should occur, and experts agree it is just a matter of time, the damage to property and the loss of life will be stupendous.

Last October, we saw the graphic and heart-wrenching images from the San Francisco earthquake. We were all relieved to know that the death toll was not as high as it might have been. It was thanks to improved preparedness that the city of San Francisco was able to cope. Would the people of southwest British Columbia be as fortunate?

Let us look at the reality of the situation. Each year Japan spends \$100 per person on earthquake preparedness. San Francisco alone spends \$19 per person. In Canada, we spend 29 cents.

Our Constitution outlines disaster response as multi-faceted. Municipalities are the first to respond in a disaster. As they are financially unable to carry this out, they must turn for funding to the provinces who must turn to the federal government for financial assistance. This is not an alien concept. The federal government has had the revenue raising system in place designed to pass

along needed funds to the provinces and to the municipalities.

This issue is of great importance in the lower mainland of British Columbia. Experts say two possibilities face this region: a major quake of up to 7.5 on the Richter scale will occur every 30 to 50 years or a catastrophe quake of more than 8 will occur every 500 years.

I am concerned about this because I believe we face several risks. Many Vancouver area highrises were built before 1975's building codes came into effect. Vancouver's airport is only three metres above sea level and the earth under its runways could liquefy, rendering the airport useless. Two major dams, the Cleveland and the Seymour Falls dams, need further investigation into their ability to withstand a quake.

Last fall in the Vancouver area, thousands of parents were alarmed to find their children were attending schools which would likely collapse in the event of an earthquake. If we happen to get an earthquake which measures 8, a catastrophe, cities would be devastated and comprehensive damage would occur from Seattle right to Prince Rupert. Experts in B.C. have repeatedly stated that emergency planning is hampered by a lack of support by the federal and the provincial governments. The Greater Vancouver Regional District has told the province that a hazard analysis needs to be done on the major lifeline systems, hospitals, roads, bridges and pipelines. The province has yet to fund this.

• (1815)

Furthermore, the province has suggested that after a major earthquake we would have to wait 24 hours before the province would provide assistance. I do not know what the provincial government believes, but if it thinks that the injured and the dying could put everything on hold for 24 hours before needing support, it better think again.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, let me make one point perfectly clear. Experts have said time and time again that southwestern British Columbia is a high risk earthquake zone. They have said that the loss of life would be extremely high should a massive earthquake occur. They have also said the best way to prevent such a tragedy is to prepare for an earthquake.

We all know the most important first step in preparedness is prediction. Why, then, Mr. Speaker, did this government cut back the earthquake prediction pro-