

● (1600)

The B.C. UFFI Action Association together with the other UFFI groups across the country reject the federal government's proposed plan of compensation. We reject because the amount (only up to \$5,000 remedial action) is too low given the cost we face and is available to only a select few (those with current health problems and/or levels above 0.1 ppm formaldehyde level). The vast majority of UFFI home owners stand to get almost nothing under this plan.

They organized a telegram campaign to the minister. Telegrams flooded in, in the thousands, which read as follows:

I expect nothing less than full compensation for foam removal and restoration of my home.

This is the position of the New Democratic Party. My colleague who spoke on this bill strongly advocated a federal-provincial conference on the matter. We say that effective help does not have to be delayed in the meantime. Surely we all agree that it would be fine if the provinces helped also, but I think the greatest help they could provide at this time would be to assist citizen action groups to move forward with some of their legal cases since the federal government seems to be so slow.

I should like to use this opportunity to commend particularly the action groups to which I have referred in all provinces. Penny Tilby, president of the B.C. action group, and John Owens, also a very active member, have put hours and hours of work into this entire effort. There are thousands of members of their groups at the present time. They have organized numerous meetings. They have up-to-date research. They have tested any and every suggestion which has been made. Also they developed an information network which is far superior to that of the federal government.

The federal government should make funds available immediately to assist these groups. If ever there was a group committed to research which has a vested interest in arriving at solutions, it is UFFI victims themselves. Despite the promises of the ministers, funds have really not been available. I believe \$10,000 was available from the Government of British Columbia to help with some of the administrative and travel costs, but to my knowledge the federal government has not yet made funds available to these groups.

Also we advocate that the least the federal government could do would be to sponsor conferences to bring together organizations in Ottawa and to listen to them. Of course, it is very convenient for the federal government to close its ears when the victims are hundreds, indeed thousands, of miles away. The Minister of Public Works (Mr. Cosgrove) should be an advocate himself because not only did his department sponsor the program in the first place, but many public buildings have been insulated with urea formaldehyde. Also we know that many schools and small trailers have particular problems. There must be action on them.

We have mentioned that we want a federal-provincial conference. However, we do not only want advisory groups, which will be used, as the Liberal government is so fond of doing, to stall, to get the government off the hook, and to do nothing to solve the problem. We want some laws passed which will provide full compensation. Bill C-109 is completely

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inadequate. I have repeated these points over and over again, as have other speakers.

I appeal once again to the minister to sponsor immediately a federal-provincial conference and to provide funds for action groups to meet here in Ottawa, to bring together their research and to take action on their own behalf. They have said that kicking them when they are down and refusing grants is very typical of what they have been led to expect from the government. The last straw with the group with which I am familiar was that they were refused charitable status for their organization, so that people contributing to them cannot even obtain tax deductions. There are over 40 groups in Quebec alone and 24 other known groups across Canada.

I urge these groups to keep the heat on and to keep pressuring. Certainly all of us in the House, including government backbenchers, should keep pressuring for justice in this case. It is a national disaster. We must establish a national disaster fund. We must find ways for the government to change and extend its bill to provide true compensation for urea formaldehyde foam insulation victims.

Hon. Bill Jarvis (Perth): Mr. Speaker, I hope my intervention in the debate on this legislation dealing with urea formaldehyde foam insulation will not be overly long, but I feel compelled to make some contribution. In my view, this legislation, taken in isolation, is woefully inadequate. I am not convinced, although I suspect, that this is the government's sole answer to a very serious emotional, social and economic problem. I would be much comforted if either the minister or perhaps his parliamentary secretary later today allays my suspicions. If this is simply a first step by the government in addressing the problem, I think I would be inclined to be more patient and more understanding. If, on the other hand, this legislation represents the total response to this very, very serious problem, then I suggest there will be difficult times ahead for the minister, for his department and for the government of which he is a member.

If one looks briefly at the history of the problem up until approximately September of last year, I suppose one might adopt the cliché, "a comedy of errors". But the word "comedy" implies that there is some levity or something funny about the situation. There is absolutely nothing funny about it. It is a tragedy of errors rather than a comedy of errors.

In August, 1977, CMHC acceptance numbers were granted by the corporation's acceptance branch. In the next month, September, 1977, urea formaldehyde foam insulation was approved by CMHC for use in the Canadian Home Insulation Program. In November, 1979, some two years later, a complete ban of the product took effect in the state of Massachusetts. Attendant upon that, of course, was significant publicity in our country. In September, 1980, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) announced the establishment of an expert advisory committee to study the documented evidence available on the product. In December, 1980, the same minister and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) took steps to institute a temporary ban