

Urea Formaldehyde Insulation Act

My other recommendation, Mr. Speaker, is that the government get its act together. The Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the NRC, CMHC, and the officials responsible for CHIP, should get together and devise a co-ordinated and meaningful program. Surely, Mr. Speaker, the government is not so big and insensitive that it cannot do that. Surely the government is not so incapable that it cannot do something in an honest way for the citizens affected by this foam insulation.

The minister advocates civil action. I feel he is somewhat cynical in that suggestion. He surely should know that a civil action on this issue will cost anywhere from \$100,000 to \$300,000 and most people cannot afford that. He must also know that the statute of limitations, which I recognize is a provincial responsibility, will prevent many people from taking legal action. Perhaps if he is serious about that, however, he can do two things. He can make some money available from the public treasury so that those affected can take action in the courts, and perhaps he can approach his provincial colleagues and suggest to them that they amend the statute of limitations requirements so that people have the time to bring this matter to the courts. I think these are sound suggestions, more so than those my friends to the right have been proposing after discovering this was a problem.

It is all well and good to say a terrible problem exists, but you have to follow it up with something concrete. I recognize and do not minimize the difficulties we face. It is a difficult and costly problem, one which we are not going to be able to resolve overnight. But at least we can put in place a process by which we can begin moving in the right direction: the removal of this insulation from Canadian homes. That is the ultimate goal.

I have tried to tie my remarks, Mr. Speaker, into the much larger question of how new chemical products and technology enter the marketplace. I hope the government has learned a lesson from this. I hope the government realizes a very costly mistake has been made, and I hope and pray it will go over the existing procedures whereby new products are registered and allowed to enter the marketplace, so that this will not take place in the future.

In conclusion, I am afraid this legislation which is before us is not adequate and does not really meet the concerns of the Canadian people. It is a bill which has been brought forward more, I suspect, out of politics than from a desire to deal honestly with a mistake. As such, Mr. Speaker, we will stand in opposition to this bill.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*Translation*]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order! It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock-North Delta (Mr. Friesen)—Automotive Industry—Application of non-tariff barriers to Japanese imports. (b) Customs inspection of ships carrying Japanese imports; the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald)—Status of Women—Voting rights of military personnel spouses. (b) Request that legislation be amended; the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Foster)—Customs and Excise—Query respecting possible extension of customs area to include continental shelf.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

UREA FORMALDEHYDE INSULATION ACT

PROVISION OF ASSISTANCE TO HOME OWNERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Ouellet that Bill C-109, to provide for payments to persons in respect of dwellings insulated with urea formaldehyde foam insulation, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

Mr. Gary F. McCauley (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening carefully to the debate this afternoon, with some interest and a great deal of disbelief at some of the statements made by hon. members opposite. I want to spend the time available to me in responding to a number of the more sensational statements that were made this afternoon, and to touch upon a number of actions the government has taken, is taking and will take.

Let me remind hon. members opposite that the Government of Canada is concerned enough about this problem to allocate over \$110 million to a program to assist the victims of urea formaldehyde foam insulation. Let me remind all those members who need reminding that those people with problems are eligible for a tax-free grant of some \$5,000. We are told that is not enough. Well, in my riding I have talked to a number of people with UFFI in their homes. They tell me that the bids they are getting from contractors to remove the insulation are well below that \$5,000 figure. We are told by scientists at NRC that not only might removal be the most expensive solution, but also possibly the worst one. We are now