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ments, failed for years to recognize the importance of the environment and to act as their inflammatory rhetoric of tonight would suggest, Mr. Speaker. I think they are being unfair to this Government by ignoring what has been done over the passed four years.

Mr. Speaker, whatever they may say, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) will have had the privilege of heading a government that during the past four years has done more for the environment than all previous governments put together. As you know, Mr. Speaker, it was this Government that passed our new legislation on the environment, one of the strictest in the world. It was this Government that initiated a program to prevent acid rain in Canada, a program that by 1994 will have reduced Canadian acid rain by 50 per cent. It is this Government that will get an agreement with the United States on acid rain. It was this Government that intensified efforts to clean up the Great Lakes and that set up a fund of \$110 million to clean up the St. Lawrence. On the international scene, it was this Government that initiated the signing of the first world protocol to protect the atmosphere: the Montreal Protocol. Understandably, Mr. Speaker, the Opposition would rather not be reminded of these facts.

The Opposition prefers to say that the Government does not care about the health of Canadians or about what will happen to future generations. However, it overlooks the fact that this is the Government that will abolish lead in motor vehicle emissions within the next few years.

Mr. Speaker, what we are hearing is incredible, and I think we should get back to the subject at hand. In the past few days, Canadians have witnessed a terrible accident, an accident that, we might as well admit, could have happened here in Canada, in the waters off Toronto or Montreal or 10 kilometres off the coast of British Columbia. We know that, Mr. Speaker, and Canadians are worried and rightly so, but that is no reason to put the blame on the Government. What do we do in this type of situation? What can we do?

Most of the Members opposite have been on the Government side before. They know that in a situation like this, the first thing to do is to keep a clear head and make sure everything has been done that is humanly possible to prevent this from occurring here in Canada. It also means making sure that if it does, we are able to take action quickly, effectively, and without flagging. That is exactly what we are doing, Mr. Speaker. In the past weeks, we in Canada have been confronted with two

incidents that will be a valuable lesson to us. We did not cause them nor are we in any way at fault. Both the accident that occurred in the State of Washington a few months ago at the end of December and the recent accident in Alaska took place outside Canadian territory. No Canadian is involved in it. But that does not mean that because we are not involved, because it happened elsewhere, we do not have to be concerned. On the contrary! Because we know that we too are vulnerable to that sort of thing. No country in the world is exempt from that kind of disaster. So it is no use shouting and throwing stones. Canadians do not want to hear such things. They have enough of that kind of politics. What Canadians want to know is what can be done in the future and what action can be taken.

What we did in the Vancouver spill, for example, from the first days, Mr. Speaker, from January 3, the day the first oil slicks hit the beaches of a national park, we had Parks Canada people there with volunteers to begin operations. We mobilized considerable resources. We are asked what we would do if there were such an oil spill. Of course, the one that just happened in Alaska is some 50 times bigger than the one that affected us in early January. But still, the one in early January was considerable. In a single day, we were able to mobilize up to 350 people to work on cleaning up the beach, up to ten vessels patrolling the waters near the beach, a dozen helicopters and so far, 370 tonnes of oil and debris have been removed from the water.

I just heard rumours that there was still oil washing up on the beaches. According to the reports we have received the cleaning operation of the Vancouver beaches was completed a few days ago and we have now entered a supervising phase to make sure that no new spill is occurring, which will eventually lead up to an assessment phase of the operations we have already carried out. Therefore, the process which was implemented over there has now been completed successfully. Unfortunately, the fact remains that we were the victims of a terrible accident which will leave indelible marks. It is clear that we just cannot assess for the time being the impact it will have on the various forms of marine life. Nobody knows for sure what happens when oil deposits fall to the bottom of the sea. We know that problems will rise, but a compensation scheme has already been implemented. We have set up an organization to help Canadians seeking damages and we have already registered 29 claims from people who are suing the carrier. And we are making every effort to help them in this endeavour.