

Urea Formaldehyde Insulation Act

with further deterioration of the foam, the formaldehyde gas will be released. We know that under certain weather conditions, such as the high humidity of the west coast, it is possible that there will be health problems in some families in the future.

Some people have a particular sensitivity to urea formaldehyde gas and there is particular risk for infants, elderly people and people with asthmatic conditions, as well as women who spend all day in their homes, those who do not go out into the workforce. The effect of UFFI is now recognized as so potentially hazardous that the real estate value of most homes insulated with this substance is nil. I have seen cases where it has actually been below zero—where people have received less than the value of the property when the home is insulated with urea formaldehyde.

Not only are urea formaldehyde foam insulation victims worried about health and economic loss, but many have been under extreme stress for almost two years, since they became aware of the problem. They are also angered beyond tolerance by the hypocritical, uncaring attitude of the government that created the problem in the first place. The government, supposedly set up to protect consumers, advocated the use of this substance to insulate homes and to save fuel costs.

A number of years ago the government was warned by its own researchers that this substance was risky and dangerous, and the Massachusetts experience confirmed this. Tests made over the past year also showed a health hazard, yet even today the government refuses to acknowledge the seriousness of the problem and that it is primarily responsible since it permitted this form of insulation to be used. It ignores the obvious and only solution, which is to provide for the removal of this poisonous substance from contaminated homes.

Let me summarize some of the facts we know about urea formaldehyde foam insulation. There are an estimated 100,000 homes in Canada that had urea formaldehyde foam installed in the walls expecting that it would improve the value and make these homes more comfortable. Through the CHIP program, the federal government is directly responsible for the insulation in at least 25,000 of these homes. In British Columbia, some 8,000 homes have used urea formaldehyde and, as a result, are at risk. People have found that sealing and ventilation techniques do not guarantee that the gases will be contained or removed. The full cost of removing the foam in most provinces is estimated to be around \$25,000 per home.

We know that health problems can occur when there is a very low level of urea formaldehyde concentration. The government uses the level of .1 parts per million foam in the air as the minimum level. I have many examples of people who have a doctor's certificate to testify the foam has caused health problems where there has been a much lower level than the .1 part per million. Symptoms caused by UFFI are nose and throat irritation, breathing difficulties, sore throat, dizziness, nausea, vomiting and asthmatic types of attacks.

We know that despite the promises of the Department of National Health and Welfare to keep physicians and medical experts more informed on this issue, even today many doctors are not aware that the symptoms they are diagnosing as

allergies are probably related to this hazardous foam insulation. Urea formaldehyde foam insulation has also been linked to nasal cancer in laboratory rats and mice. There are health hazards that have been substantiated. They are not evident in every home where this foam has been used but they are very serious and are potentially a risk and a worry for most home owners who have used it.

There are structural problems in the homes that have used this type of insulation as well. For example, there are cases where urea formaldehyde foam insulation has been used and the electrical wiring has been corroded. It also creates rot problems. I understand this is particularly prevalent in a climate of high humidity and that means, of course, in the coastal regions of British Columbia. This structural problem leads to potential fires and contributes to shortening the safe lifetime of the house.

In 100 per cent of the 100,000 homes I mentioned, there are very serious financial problems. Houses with UFFI show a very dramatic loss in value which can only be changed by removing the foam. Real estate agents are asking whether there is UFFI in a house when it is listed for sale or when its value is assessed. As soon as they know that to be the case, the value drops. This is acknowledged by many provincial and municipal governments which are reducing taxes because the value of the property has fallen. It has been suggested that the form for assessing the value of a house insulated with urea formaldehyde foam used by real estate companies will contain a question about this.

Those are some of the symptoms we know of that have created such a serious problem for many Canadian home owners. The problems with this type of foam came to my attention two years ago, as I am sure it did to many other hon. members. I recall a number of very pathetic human situations that raised serious concern in many of us. I recall, for example, an elderly couple who lived in a very wealthy part of Vancouver coming into my office. They had put all their life savings into their home, and it had beautiful antiques, draperies and in fact gold leaf trimming. Because of health problems they had to move into the basement. They were really wrought with anxiety wondering what to do. The woman had a very serious asthmatic condition and was in bed most of the time. Her husband was completely bowed under with worry. They could not move out of the house and they could not live in it.

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Another family with young children, where the wife and one baby particularly affected by the gas, lived in a tent in their backyard. Eventually, after the summer was over, they had to sell their home without knowing what would happen. They had no other choice and took a considerable loss. Even now they do not know whether they will be compensated.

Two years ago a man living not too far from my office came in very, very angry. He is still very, very angry. His name is John Owens and he has been very outspoken on this issue. He had not yet been seriously affected, although members of his