

*Urea Formaldehyde Insulation Act*

directly to the committee as I was able to hear them at that mass meeting one night in my constituency. It is very important to listen to the representatives of victims. The committee will also wish to listen, of course, to engineers and other people familiar with this foam, but the bill should be given very thorough study in committee. Amendments should be considered to widen the coverage. If we are going to give aid, we should not be niggardly, we should not draw the lines too restrictively. We should reconsider the deadline for helping people retroactively to the announcement of the program. Some people who had UFFI in their homes acted quickly, before the government announced its program. Those people paid a lot of money to do that and have gone into debt. They should not suffer because they took that quick action.

Some members mentioned the regulations. Of course, the regulations are very important. Clause 3 of the bill provides that assistance will be given to applicants, in accordance with the evidence and according to criteria set out in the regulations. At this point we do not know what kind of evidence will be required or what the criteria will be. It is very important that members know those important factors before there is a final vote on the bill at third reading.

I wish to mention a few other steps that might be taken to help these victims. I mentioned before, and I have repeated—and this has been taken up by others—that we should consider using the tradesmen in the Armed Forces to help take out some of this foam. We have many engineers and tradesmen in the Armed Forces who help in times of national disaster. If there were a flood or something like that, the Armed Forces would come to the assistance of the people concerned. We have these trained tradesmen who are being paid salaries by the federal government and their equipment is covered by the federal government. Could they not be put to work for a year or two to remove the foam insulation? That would save the government moneys they would pay to private contractors or private businessmen. It is not that it is bad to give such contracts, but we are in a period of restraint. We are already paying these tradesmen and engineers; they are not faced with any great military challenge at this time and could be used to great effect in helping individuals remove this foam from their homes.

There is another matter, Mr. Speaker. The government says it is not legally responsible for the damage resulting from this foam insulation, and I agree that that is probably correct. However, should the government not consider that it could take the corrective measures and pay for them, and then be subrogated legally in the right that the victims might have had against those who were responsible, whether it be those two installed the foam improperly, or whether it be those who manufactured the foam. Whoever is found responsible, there is a right of action against them. The government may hesitate to spend sums of money now to compensate these victims, but it could take corrective action and then be subrogated in its legal right to make claims against the people who were really responsible for these serious damages.

• (1640)

In his announcement last December the minister spoke about research being undertaken to develop neutralizers to the foam insulation. If such neutralizers could be developed, that would be much cheaper than tearing down walls and buildings, and so forth, to get the foam out because neutralizers could be injected into walls. That would do away with the negative effects of UFFI and probably solve the problem. In his final remarks today or before the committee I would like the minister to tell us what progress has been made by research scientists in developing UFFI neutralizers.

I do not know whether this is correct or not, but some victims have told me that the grants which will be made to them under this program will be taxable and that they will have to include those grants as part of their taxable income. This may be a case of taking away with one hand while giving with the other, and I would like some clarification on that point.

I do not want to give a long speech on this matter. I merely wanted to put on the record my very real concerns about what I believe to be a serious national disaster and a very, very sad situation. I urge the government to act quickly and fairly to bring justice to the home owners affected.

**Mr. Keeper:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East (Mr. Allmand) would entertain a question.

**Mr. Allmand:** Sure.

**Mr. Keeper:** I listened with great interest to the hon. member's speech about urea formaldehyde. He outlined the problem very well. He made it clear that there are people across the country who are suffering very severe health problems because of this insulation. He noted the fact that the government subsidized—we might even say promoted—the use of this kind of insulation in houses across the country. The hon. member made clear note of the fact that while the government may not have a strict or narrow legal responsibility to compensate people and to help them with their financial problems, it has a moral responsibility and should act upon it. The hon. member pointed out that citizens who have put this foam insulation into their houses—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Order, please. Did the hon. member seek the floor to be recognized to participate in the debate or to ask a question?

**Mr. Keeper:** Mr. Speaker, I will go straight to the question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** The House would like to hear the question.

**Mr. Keeper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I will take your advice to heart.

Having made such a good speech about urea formaldehyde on behalf of the citizens of this country and given the