

Government Orders

Another policy question often asked is if this initiative is connected in any way to the new proposed gun control legislation. The answer is no. This initiative is the result of an agreement signed in March 1991 and has no connection whatsoever to the gun control legislation recently tabled.

Often legal questions are asked with respect to the act. One question often asked is why the act is to come into force by order in council. It is specifically provided that the act will come into force on a day to be set by the order of the governor in council to ensure that the grace periods provided for in the convention will be respected. This will enable us to make the date of coming into force of the act coincide with that of the coming into force of the convention.

Another legal question often asked is when the convention will come into force. It is impossible to predict when the convention will come into force. Section 3 of article 13 of the convention provides that the convention will come into force on the 60th day following the date of deposit of the 35th instrument of ratification by a state, provided that at least five states have declared they are producer states. Should 35 instruments of ratification be deposited before the deposit of their instruments by five producer states, the convention will come into force on the 60th day following the date of deposit of the instrument of ratification of the fifth producer state.

Another legal question often asked is what happens to the definition of detection agent if the technical annex is amended. This is not a problem. The word convention is defined to refer to the convention as amended from time to time. This means that the definition of detection agent is ambulatory. It will follow any amendment in the technical annex to the convention.

A further legal question often asked is what happens to the definition of plastic explosives if the convention is amended. Amendments to the definition of plastic explosives in the convention would not be automatically reflected in the Explosives Act because we repeated the definition instead of referring to it. We would have to amend the definition in the Explosives Act in order to have it follow an amendment to that found in the convention. However, from a practical point of view this should not be a problem. The definition of plastic explosives is standard. Furthermore it is unlikely that the convention itself will be amended. The only amendments contemplated are to the technical annex.

● (1350)

In addition to the technical questions, the policy questions, and the legal questions, we have what we refer to as miscellaneous questions. It is often asked why it took nearly five years from the March 1991 signing of the convention to table the bill. Initial MOU development, which began shortly after the signing of the convention, involved considerable consultation with

DND, Canada Customs, and Transport Canada. Additional time was lost in 1993 when there was a change in government prior to the tabling and approval of the memorandum to cabinet. It required a second consultation and resubmission of the MC.

I support the Explosives Act. As a member of the natural resources committee I recommend Bill C-71, the Explosives Act, at report stage to this honourable House.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to enter the debate on Bill C-71, an act to amend the Explosives Act.

When I read over the act I notice some very specific benefits for Canada, specifically in the area of vapour detection. Our government is very interested in promoting scientific and technological devices to expand our knowledge base and to increase employment. It is very interesting that Canada is a world leader in this type of technology.

I am very pleased to speak in favour of the bill. I note this is a UN convention. It basically restores our commitment to the United Nations and to other countries to detect plastic explosives and prevent their exportation throughout the world.

There have been a few classic examples of plastic explosives being used by terrorists both in and out of Canada. Many of us can remember the Air India disaster and numerous other cases where terrorists have used plastic explosives and the death and dismemberment of many innocent people has resulted. The bill basically addresses that issue with the objective of detecting and stamping out the use of plastic explosives for that very purpose.

It is necessary that the bill be brought into place to recognize our commitment to the United Nations and to recognize the need to deal with terrorist activities. I note that Canada is also a producer of plastic explosives, but the main consumer of them in Canada is our own military. I understand the Canadian military has approximately a 10-year supply of plastic explosives. I am very happy to see that we have made a provision in the act for a 15-year moratorium to allow the inventory of unmarked plastic explosives to be brought down while the new replacements have this detection device included.

Heathrow International Airport uses canines and detection devices to control the exportation of firearms and dangerous substances. We have developed a whole technology to do that. The world does that very well. However we must always be on guard for the development of new types technology. Plastic explosives and small component devices can be exported very easily.

● (1355)

I support Bill C-71 and the effect it will have in the industrial sector in creating jobs for Canadians.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.)