

The bill contains provision for the creation of response capability in Canadian waters funded by private commitments by those who transport goods in our waters, especially oil. The result should be the creation of a genuine response capability in Canadian waters. So far, so good, but the issue that is not dealt with directly in this legislation, and which is raised to such a great extent in the Brander-Smith report, is the more important — in many ways — objective of prevention of actions occurring in the first place.

A proposal has been advanced in the other chamber that we proceed to provide financing for the double-hulling of many ships. The comments of the review panel with respect to inspection of tankers and other vessels in Canadian waters are very instructive. I want to refer to the Brander-Smith report beginning at page 22. This is what the panel writes:

Given the inherent risks of transporting oil and chemicals in Canadian waters, it is imperative that all tankers, both Canadian and foreign, be seaworthy at all times.

To this we should say "Amen".

With cost-cutting in the shipping industry, planned preventive maintenance and inspections risk become less of a priority to tanker owners. Tankers with aging and deteriorating structures and equipment are an unwelcome invitation to disaster.

This is the result of the panel's report.

This can only be averted by aggressive vessel inspections and prompt detention of tankers in port for repairs when they do not meet Canadian or international standards for seaworthiness and pollution prevention.

Why was it not possible for the government to introduce a bill incorporating this recommendation of that highly respected Brander-Smith review panel? Why was not it regarded as a priority measure by this government to pass this bill before we get into a fall election or a leadership contest?

The report went on to say:

In 1988, the Coast Guard inspected only 8 per cent of the foreign vessels entering Canadian ports. According to the Coast Guard, most of its inspection resources (up to 90 per cent in some regions) are presently committed to conducting compulsory inspections. Under the Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control to which Canada is a co-operating party, Canada is now committed to inspecting 25 per cent of all foreign tankers visiting Canadian ports. (The results of these inspections will be stored in an international database and shared with European nations, who will also inspect 25 per cent of foreign tankers visiting their ports.)

[Senator Perrault]

The percentage should be very much higher, as I said earlier.

The report also recommends:

3.3 That the Canadian Coast Guard inspect every foreign tanker on its first visit to a Canadian port and immediately increase inspection levels to 25 per cent of foreign tankers in accordance with the port-state agreement...

But, as I say, the Americans are pushing that percentage up to a very much higher degree.

In the other place, it was suggested by some opposition members that the government establish a fund with a \$2 per tonne levy. In 10 years, they would have some \$800 million, a fund that would be a good start toward the renewal of tanker fleets, with the result that more tankers would be equipped with double hulls.

In addition to double-hulling, revenues from source could be used for many other good purposes relating to our environmental concerns. It has been suggested that the Coast Guard, for example, requires improved equipment, and that more money be allocated toward improving research and development in related fields. It has been suggested that moneys are required for the development of an electronic chart that would enhance the degree of safety in waters used by oil tankers.

Other recommendations were produced by Brander-Smith and other bodies concerned about the pollution of our waters; proposals, again, which are not part of the bill before us. Why have we no companion legislation before us which would meet these other recommendations and needs?

I mentioned the fact about the desirability of extending the inspection of fleets of non-Canadian known tankers. I believe this measure would enjoy support from coast to coast in Canada. It would not be controversial at all.

While the bill advances some proposals which merit support, surely it represents only the first steps toward a satisfactory policy of prevention and cure. In the next Parliament, we must work together to produce measures that will strengthen and address specifically every possible preventive initiative. It is absolutely essential. If we had a major oil spill tomorrow afternoon off the East Coast of Canada, all sorts of recriminations would be flying around this country. People would say that measures such as these should have been implemented two years ago. Let us avoid the tragedies and the very costly disasters which have plagued so many countries in the world.

I wish to see this bill move to committee quickly where we can hear further evidence. I would then be prepared to make a more complete statement at third reading.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to and bill read second time.