

Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Co., Limited

eloquent. In 1985, the last year for which figures are available, 768 Canadians lost their lives on the job and 16.2 million working days were lost as result of accidents. The cost, both direct and indirect, works out to about \$14 billion, a very high price to pay for this country, both in human and financial terms.

[English]

This tragic and intolerable situation demands that we make every effort to ensure efficient, modern and effective regulation of safety and health in the workplace.

The amendments which I have proposed will make an important contribution to protecting the lives and well-being of employees of the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company in the Flin Flon mineral area of northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

[Translation]

I want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to explain the reasons for these amendments and give a short history of the problem we are anxious to solve.

[English]

As you may know, the Flin Flon mineral area is a large, vaguely defined region situated mainly in Manitoba but extending into Saskatchewan, with the majority of employees and mining operations located in Manitoba. Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting mines and plants straddle the border between the two provinces.

Because of the interprovincial nature of the enterprise, mining operations in the area were brought under federal labour jurisdiction by the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Act of 1947.

However, as we all know, mining is an occupation with many specific hazards not found in other types of work. As a result, specific regulations are required to deal with all the special occupational safety and health problems in this industry.

Therefore, the problem in the Flin Flon mineral area is that Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting operations are under federal jurisdiction, and federal occupational safety and health legislation has applied. However, for many years each of the provinces has tried to apply its own mining occupational safety and health legislation.

[Translation]

The result has been a degree of overlap and even a certain amount of confusion, so that protection of the occupational safety and health of company employees was not as effective as it should have been.

[English]

Provincial Governments, industry and unions have stated concern regarding this situation and their strong preference for any arrangement that would permit one uniform set of provincial occupational safety and health legislation to apply.

• (1550)

In order to eliminate all possible confusion, and to give Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting workers the benefit of a single uniform set of rules in this all-important area of occupational safety and health, I propose the following measures, which have been developed after extensive consultation with the provinces, the company and the unions; first, amendment of the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Act to provide that Manitoba occupational safety and health statutes and regulations will apply to all Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting operations in the Flin Flon mineral area on both sides of the boundary between Manitoba and Saskatchewan; second, the Flin Flon mineral area will be defined in a Memorandum Of Understanding between the parties involved; third, inspection in occupational safety and health services will be provided by the Manitoba inspectorate.

A letter of agreement will cover this issue. The details relating to this element are now being discussed with the Province of Manitoba.

[Translation]

Since a very small proportion of the company's operations and jobs is located in Saskatchewan, that province is willing to let Manitoba statutes apply on its territory. Current mining operations in Saskatchewan will be terminated in a few years.

Finally, I should add that Manitoba recently passed a new series of updated mining regulations. These regulations are the result of a tripartite consultation process and provide good protection in terms of occupational health and safety in contemporary mining operations.

[English]

This Bill, which has the support of the Provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the company and the unions, provides an effective resolution of this long-standing problem, ensuring a high standard of occupational safety and health protection for Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting employees. The proposed Act will come into force on a date to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council. This will be the earliest date that will provide for, first, the finalization of the letter of agreement with the Province of Manitoba and, second, a clear transition to the administration by the province.

This Bill will help achieve better protection for the well-being and, indeed, the very lives of Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting employees in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. These workers daily face occupational hazards in order to earn their living and contribute to the economic well-being of our nation. They have a right to be protected by efficient, modern occupational safety and health regulations designed for their industry and their needs. I urge Hon. Members on both sides of this House to co-operate in passing these amendments as quickly as possible.

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, in saying a few words on Bill C-98, I will say it is a lucky day for the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux). He is going to get two