

*Canada Shipping Act***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**CANADA SHIPPING ACT AND RELATED ACTS**

## MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-75, an Act to amend the Canada Shipping Act and to amend the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, the Maritime Code Act and the Oil and Gas Production and Conservation Act in consequence thereof, as reported (with amendments) from a legislative committee; and Motions Nos. 5, 6 and 11 (Mr. Angus, p.12764).

**Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment or two to talk about the whole concept of user fees, particularly as they apply to the Coast Guard. I do so with the benefit of some knowledge of matters such as this. I do a bit of sailing and I have a certain amount of knowledge—I do not pretend to be an expert by any means—of what happens, the way people view the Coast Guard, and the way in which it is used out of necessity by small craft owners.

Let us take a look at the Coast Guard and what it is. Basically it performs two functions. One function is the policing of boundaries, which it does in an exemplary way. The other function is a safety one. It performs a safety function for people who require assistance from time to time when they are on the water. I want to address myself to that aspect for a few moments.

I should like to draw an analogy between persons travelling by automobile down a highway who have problems with their automobiles. They are able to call for the Ontario Provincial Police, the RCMP, or the local constabulary and obtain assistance. There is no charge. The assistance is offered and given; whatever is required to be done is done. That person is able to go on his way and continue to operate as he anticipated he would. The same basic service must be available on the water, and the same principle must prevail. A person, whether or not he can afford to dig into his pocket and pay, must be able to call for and get help from the Coast Guard if that person deems it necessary in the circumstances.

● (1150)

The difficulty in the user fee concept, and this is where we have a problem, is that no one knows at this point whether it is the intention of the Government to establish a user fee for such an event. What you will have happening, I think, having watched boaters for a number of years, is that people will be reluctant to call for the assistance they need when they need it if there is a fee attached to getting that assistance.

Let me give an example. You are in a narrows where the water is a little rough but it is protected reasonably well from wind. You have trouble with the motor of your boat. You can get it going but it won't keep going. At this point what you do is radio ship to shore and seek the assistance of the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard comes out and will do one of a

number of things. They will either give you assistance in the form of gasoline if that is your problem, they may arrange to have you towed to a safe harbour or they may arrange to simply watch over you while you do the work to make sure that nothing untoward occurs, either by virtue of you being in a shipping lane and unable to get out of it or perhaps by virtue of the tide itself taking you into danger.

I have seen many boaters who have temporary problems with motors of their boats. I have seen them on many occasions call for assistance, but between the time they make the call and the assistance arrives they are able to correct the problem. They wait to notify the Coast Guard when they arrive, but then the boaters move on under their own power. If the person out on the boat knows there is going to be a charge levied against him for asking for that service, there will be a delay, I predict, in requesting the assistance needed. Boaters will spend more time monkeying around trying to solve the problem before making the call. As a result, rather than a safer system on the water, we will have a less safe system on the water. I suggest that it does not take a genius to see this.

I invite any Member of the House of Commons to spend a few days this coming summer on the St. Lawrence River, which is close by, or even on the Ottawa River, and I don't personally boat there—it doesn't happen on the Ottawa River as it turns out—and see the numbers of times on the St. Lawrence River that the Coast Guard is requested to provide assistance. If people are reluctant to seek that assistance by virtue of the cost attendant upon getting it, potential dangers will result. For the tiny financial benefit to the coffers of the Government of Canada by virtue of the imposition of a user fee in situations such as that, the risks of delays will far outweigh them.

I am pleading, I suppose, for some understanding of human nature. That is all. If your car is coughing and sputtering on the highway, all you need to do is pull over, walk and get assistance. You can if you wish, if you have the means, get assistance from local police forces. On the water, however, it is an entirely different and much more difficult situation. There should be no impediment put in the way of a person on the water being able to call for and get assistance. I suggest small though the user fee may be, it will become an impediment and, therefore, will in itself create a more hazardous situation than previously existed, and I consider that to be folly on the part of Government.

I can well appreciate the Government's concern over finances. I can well understand that the Government wants to find ways to levy the cost out a little more equitably—I am not sure that is the right term in this circumstance—but in this particular instance safety is far more important than the minimal dollar return. Since we are encouraging people to utilize the waters surrounding Canada, and we are encouraging people to vacation and use those facilities in Canada, we should be prepared to provide the necessary policing force required to meet the potential dangers that will exist.