

*Non-smokers' Health Act*

[Translation]

Since it is easier to allow smoking in certain areas than to provide for a totally smoke-free environment, the concept will allow for more uniform and more effective implementation of this legislation.

[English]

However in the spirit of providing a smoke-free environment, designated smoking rooms in buildings, the construction of which commences after December 31, 1989, will need to be independently ventilated. Designated smoking rooms in older buildings will need to be independently ventilated to the extent reasonably practicable. Detailed technical requirements such as ventilation rates will be specified in regulations that will be developed in consultation with management and labour representatives.

• (1540)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, representatives of employers, employees and health groups support these amendments. I only hope that I can count on all Hon. Members of this House to support them just as much so that we can implement this Bill as soon as possible. The original Act was given Royal Assent nearly a year ago.

That is why I propose in clause 16 that the law take effect six months after the amendments receive Royal Assent, which I realize will give just enough time to put the necessary regulations in place.

This Bill is an important piece of non-partisan legislation which deserves to be applied effectively, in keeping with its original spirit and intent. It is a major step towards a healthier work environment for Canadians. I therefore count on the support of all Hon. Members of this House to pass this Bill.

[English]

**Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak on this Bill although there was equal demand to be in my constituency where I was to hear the presentations of citizens respecting pension reforms.

The Liberal caucus supports the quick passage of Bill C-27. In fact, I would have given the Government an excellent rating for introducing Bill C-27 which proposes amendments to the Non-smokers' Health Act except

that in stalling for a year the Government almost killed the initiative of a private Members' Bill. The Non-smokers' Health Act, Bill C-204, sponsored by Lynn McDonald, was introduced and given first reading on October 6, 1986, almost three years ago. The Bill was given Royal Assent on June 28, 1988, but was not proclaimed. Thus, the Non-smokers' Health Act has been in limbo for almost a year now.

This is not surprising given the Government's initial lack of enthusiasm for Bill C-204. When introduced, Lynn McDonald's private Members' Bill was apparently opposed by the federal Cabinet. However, opposition Members of Parliament teamed up with government back-bench Members of Parliament to force the passage of the Bill, a true example of non-partisan approach when it comes to the fundamental issue of health care and health safety.

Yet, after the Bill was given Royal Assent, the Government did not move quickly enough to proclaim it. Members from all Parties had to continually urge the Government to take action to proclaim the Bill or to introduce amendments to it. I myself, Mr. Speaker, urged the Government to make the Non-smokers' Health Act law when I delivered a statement under Standing Order 31 on the occasion of the beginning of the National Campaign for Action on Tobacco on May 16.

By neglecting the Non-smokers' Health Act for almost a year, the Government has illustrated its inability to translate the scientific evidence of a major epidemic into a corresponding appropriate political action and response. Moreover, the Government's reluctance to proclaim the Bill after it was given Royal Assent proved the Government's arrogant tendency to make a mockery sometimes of the decisions of Parliament. This delay also illustrated the Government's lack of concern for the health of Canadians when the lobby from tobacco industries became very strong.

As I have mentioned to the House before, Mr. Speaker, last year more than 35,000 Canadians died prematurely from diseases caused by tobacco. This total is greater than the total number of people who died as a result of accidents, suicides, homicides, AIDS, alcohol and alcohol-related totalities. Despite such statistics the Government postponed dealing with Bill C-204 for almost a year. In a sense this allowed continued health risks to occur.