

Government Orders

not pose a significant problem or cost to the respective regulatory bodies.

Canada's position as a leader in the development of vapour detection technology will be enhanced as a result of the ratification of the international convention. Increased foreign market penetration by Canadian equipment manufacturers is virtually a certainty. Therefore the proclamation of the amendment has the potential to help stimulate job creation and contribute to Canada's future economic growth and trade.

The amendment to the Explosives Act demonstrates the Government of Canada's commitment to good government. We are determined to contribute to the health and safety of passengers on aircraft. We are committed to working with our international partners to do whatever we can to stop the threat of terrorism in our skies and around the globe.

The amendment to the Explosives Act will send a signal to terrorists everywhere that Canada will not be an easy target for their deadly campaigns of violence. In the process, Canadian manufacturers of vapour detection equipment will be able to take advantage of significant marketing opportunities. As a result, the proposed amendment to the Explosives Act will contribute to two major federal goals: job creation and Canadian economic growth. Moreover the passage of the amendment will protect the health and safety of all Canadians.

I thank members opposite for their support in passing important legislation. I urge all members of the House to give speedy passage to the amendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to speak as well on Bill C-71, an act to amend the Explosives Act. There is of course already an Explosives Act, which this bill will amend, and the aim of the earlier legislation was, as a general rule, to ensure public and worker safety.

This legislation governed the composition, quality and characteristics of standard explosives as well as their manufacture, import, sale, purchase, possession and storage. It covered pyrotechnic devices, that is, the products used for fireworks.

The new legislation brought before us today will require the incorporation of a detectable additive in plastic explosives to enable the governor in council to approve regulations on the possession, transfer and destruction of unmarked plastic explosives. The aim is to thwart terrorism, as my colleague mentioned, and to enable Canada to ratify the Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection, concluded in Montreal on March 1, 1991.

The bill would also prohibit, among other things, the manufacture, stockpiling, possession, transfer, transport, import and export of unmarked plastic explosives, except in the instances provided by the convention and for military purposes of vital importance clearly specified in the legislation.

What is the Montreal Convention? I am asking the question for the benefit of Canadians watching us. The convention was signed in March 1991 at the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization by the members of this organization. Its aim is to control the proliferation of plastic explosives used in terrorist attacks.

It covers unmarked plastic explosives, that is, explosives that do not contain a substance permitting easy detection and it requires signatory countries and producing countries, such as Canada, to mark plastic explosives, except those used for research purposes or by the police and the military.

• (1325)

The bill proposes marking plastic explosives through the incorporation of a chemical that could be picked up by the detection equipment installed at international airports in Canada to counteract the threat of terrorism.

Generally speaking, Bill C-71 meets the main requirements of the Convention. It appears to meet all of the obligations in it. First, the bill prohibits the production of unmarked plastic explosives, except in the instances provided. Then it announces regulations governing the transportation and possession of unmarked plastic explosives. Finally, it provides measures for unmarked plastic explosives produced or owned prior to the date the present bill comes into effect, as my colleague stated just before me.

Clearly, plastic explosives are the preferred weapon of terrorists, for the very reason that they are hard to detect. One need only think of recent terrorist incidents mentioned previously by my colleagues and remembered by many, such as the one involving Pan Am flight 103 from London, which exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, a few years ago, or UTA flight 772, that crashed in Africa not too long ago. More than 440 people were killed in these two incidents. One might also think of the Air-India tragedy, another terrorist attack where a 747 that had taken off in Canada blew up over the Atlantic, south of the Republic of Ireland, killing everyone on board.

We must make sure that plastic explosives can be detected in airports. That is what this bill is about. Of course, the Bloc Québécois reaffirms its support. Especially since, based on information we received, production costs for the manufacturers, most of them private enterprises, will increase only marginally as a result of this decision.

However, we nonetheless have some concerns about this bill. First, while the convention was signed on March 1, 1991, no bill was introduced until now, nearly five years later. This obviously