

Private Members' Business

continued benefits until the required modification or reassignment was arranged. If a suitable reassignment job or a job modification were not possible or practicable, then the employee would be entitled to leave for as long as the medical concerns related to her pregnancy persist.

Of course, the usual means of dispute resolution already existing under Part III of the Canada Labour Code would apply. The worker would have to give her employer fair notice of when she intended to return to work or to her usual job if she had been reassigned.

This approach seems eminently fair since its effect would be to give pregnant employees exactly the same rights to request reassignment or leave as a precaution that employers already have when a pregnant worker is judged unable to continue doing her job. The principles and mechanisms are already in place. As I have said, the provisions would affect relatively few workers and involve relatively little cost.

Thus, through an amendment to the Canada Labour Code, we could ensure that the important human rights to equality in the workplace is extended. Women workers are extremely valuable to the Canadian economy and their continuing commitment to the labour force should be recognized and encouraged.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Abitibi who tabled this motion in the House. The hon. member is in fact suggesting that the Canada Labour Code should contain certain provisions that would enable pregnant workers in federally regulated businesses in Canada to claim certain rights with respect to precautionary withdrawal. The motion says: “—federally regulated businesses in Quebec and Canada”. I am not so sure about the wording at this point, because so far, Quebec is still part of Canada, and I hope it will remain so. But in any case, this is a minor detail. I think that basically, what the hon. member is trying to do is to make these privileges available to pregnant women.

I wholeheartedly support this initiative, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I think not enough is being done, and this is an understatement, to encourage pregnant women who can work to stay in the labour market. Unfortunately, some people still have this attitude that as soon as a woman is pregnant, she should get out of the labour force as soon

as possible. Of course, that is just not true. If a woman decides to work throughout her pregnancy, why not, and I think we should ensure that at least in federally regulated areas, the opportunity should be there for pregnant woman to stay on the job if they want to.

Mr. Speaker, I also think that if we adopted this motion today, it would be a clear message to the women of this country. Lest we forget, this is Women's rights Week, and tomorrow is International Women's Day.

So I think adopting this motion would be good news for Canadian women. The motion does not oblige, it only says “that the government should consider—”. Of course if the government decides to adopt this motion today, I imagine there will an amendment to the Canada Labour Code. Subsequently, the amendment will be considered in the House, voted on, considered in committee and go through all other stages. In any case, I think this would be an excellent message for us to send today, especially if the vote is unanimous.

[*English*]

It has happened in the past in this House that some government members are instructed or asked to talk a bill out and speak in favour of it until the bill dies in the House of Commons. I hope that will not be the case today. We are on the eve of women's day. This is women's week. This would be an excellent initiative to adopt. I think it would send the signal that we care about working women and that we want to do something to help them.

If that is the case, which I trust it is, now that we are only a few minutes before six o'clock, I hope that the House will permit this bill to come to a vote and that the motion will not be talked out. If the motion is talked out then let the message be clear that those who talk it out, even if they are speaking for it when they are talking it out, are really against the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Hogue (Outremont): Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues explained—and I am quite aware of the situation— working women in federally-regulated businesses enjoy some benefits like maternity leave and parental leave. What our colleague, the hon. member for Abitibi, proposes would be a very minor improvement but nevertheless rather important for the pregnant women involved. The amendment he proposes would fill one of the remaining void in the legislation and help a growing number of working Canadian women who try to