

Non-Smokers' Health Act

but on which we have not had government action. The problem we face at this time is that if Members of the House do not support this legislation it will not pass. We have no guarantee that the Government will act in this matter.

I am not giving away any secrets, but it is interesting to note that the Member for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) and myself met with the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux) on Wednesday morning. He indicated that as far as he knew there was no government intent to act, although he would consult with the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) and the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) to see if perhaps they had some plans about which he could be made aware. In fairness to the Minister of Labour, he stated that he understood something might be implemented with respect to advertising and other matters.

It is ironic that on a matter which concerns the health of so many Canadians and indeed the lives of so many Canadians, the Minister of Labour who is responsible for the enforcement of occupational health and safety across the country does not know what the Minister of National Health and Welfare or the President of the Treasury Board, who is responsible for workers in the federal Government domain, may or may not be doing.

I am very concerned that there is no Government action and that the best we get is an occasional indication that perhaps the Minister of National Health and Welfare will put his foot down on the tobacco companies. That is not good enough because it does not provide the leadership that many Canadians want.

This week the federal Law Reform Commission indicated that our federal laws with regard to workplace safety are completely inadequate. Polluters are allowed to get away with anything and it is suggested in the report that Canadian workers are treated as guinea pigs, and that it is dangerous to work in Canada. These remarks are made by a very responsible group and they indicate the problem we face in general with workplace safety. Yet, referring back to the Minister of Labour, I asked him prior to Christmas if there would be any new legislation with regard to occupational health and safety. Again, he indicated that he did not think that would happen. He could not commit himself to inaction for two years but he did not think there would be any legislation. It is evident that the Government is not taking the lives of Canadians seriously.

The Hon. Member for Hull-Aylmer pointed out in his learned statement to the House that allowing smoking in Canada is costing lives. It is not a matter of whether the Member from British Columbia believes he should have the right to smoke on his flight to British Columbia because it is seven hours long. I am going to British Columbia twice in the next couple of weeks and I do not want to have to be on the same airplane as that Hon. Member because his smoking will affect my health. That is the problem.

For some reason, there are Members in the House and people across the country who believe that we are picking on

them as a minority if we say they should not smoke. The truth is that if they want to smoke in an airplane, in an office building, or want to smoke at the workplace, they are endangering not only the health but the lives of other Canadians. Public education is necessary for those people, as well as young people of Canada, but it is not just a matter of talking about the dangers to their own health and lives, but a matter of them understanding how they are hurting other Canadians.

There are very few Canadians who really believe that smoking is acceptable. There are very few Canadians who believe they are not hurting themselves when they smoke. There is an attitudinal problem among a number of smokers because they believe they are hurting no one else but themselves.

Perhaps someone in the middle of a field or at the bottom of a mine shaft is not damaging the health of other Canadians, but most Canadians work closer to each other and travel in more confined quarters. There are areas of the House of Commons that are certainly not very healthy to walk through when there have been a number of smokers there.

We need legislation that will protect Canadians. I believe the Hon. Member for Broadview-Greenwood should be congratulated not only for presenting this Bill in the House, but for the very forceful manner in which she has often made sure that people across the country know that this legislation is here. I hope Members of Parliament will do the same as the Member for Broadview-Greenwood and ensure that the people of Canada know that this legislation is before the House of Commons and solicit their views on how the legislation can be strengthened, rather than weakened as proposed by the Conservative Member from British Columbia who, to be fair, I believe is speaking for himself.

It is important that this legislation be strengthened so that Canadians can work, travel and live in a healthy place. That is the purpose of this legislation.

Mr. Paul Gagnon (Calgary North): Madam Speaker, I want to commend my hon. colleague, the Member for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald), for introducing this Bill in the House.

The Bill seeks, through a number of measures, to control smoking by Canadians and thereby improve and protect the health of Canadians. This is an objective that all Members of the House support, as the health hazards of smoking are very well documented.

Measures to control smoking in public places are receiving strong public support and have resulted in a number of government actions and proposed initiatives. They are initiatives to control or restrict smoking in public areas, in public transportation, and in the workplace. Public support will continue to increase, not only among non-smokers but among smokers as well. It is important to note the support of many smokers for these measures as it is a recognition by the smokers of their responsibility to avoid exposing non-smokers to tobacco smoke. This support must be encouraged and