

This new legislation will ensure that agriculture and forestry, two of Canada's most important economic sectors, will be able to compete in what is a very competitive world market-place.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to make a few comments on Bill C-67 respecting the Plant Protection Act. As the parliamentary secretary has said, this is a bill respecting the updating of the previous act known as the Plant Quarantine Act that has been in place since 1967. I agree that it is long overdue and that an updating of that bill is taking place now.

Basically this is good bill. I look forward to seeing the bill in committee where we can have further discussions on some of the particular aspects of it.

However, this bill will assist Canada's plant industry to avoid the economically disastrous effects of insect pests and diseases while maintaining Canada's foreign markets by preventing the spread of plant pests into foreign countries and from them coming into Canada from foreign countries.

If there is any hope of prevention or control of plant pests, the first essential is to be able to detect these pests at the early stage and deal with the problem in a responsible and expeditious manner. The amendments that this bill provides should enable the Department of Agriculture to react more quickly and efficiently to any emergencies in plant pest outbreaks that take place.

The proposed legislation as well, as the parliamentary secretary has stated, would help any person or government to establish a pest control network in order to control or eradicate pests outside Canada.

If there was an outbreak of a plant pest or disease in another country in the past, we in Canada, unless we did it through a project sponsored by an organization such as CIDA which could take some time, were not able to jump in quickly and help solve the problem. I can think of one situation in which we had a lot of transplants purchased from the southern United States come into Canada. This allows us, if necessary, to go in there and assist in order to provide better and safer plant material coming here for our producers.

Government Orders

The bill should also improve the compensation provisions since compensation would be paid not only for destruction of a plant or a thing, not only for prohibition of sale or restriction of use of the property, but also for any treatment to a place, to a storage area or to a crop. That availability has not been there before for compensation by Agriculture Canada or by the government. I am sure such a provision will be welcomed by the agriculture industry.

However I have a few concerns as well. This legislation also gives the the ability to the Governor in Council to make regulations which would provide an inspector with the power to issue tickets for minor infractions of the act. I feel that should be and must be carefully reviewed so that the inspectors new enforcement powers are not overly extensive.

The ticketing mechanism this bill puts in place is not all bad. It allows inspections at border crossings or on site within the boundaries of Canada to take place and a ticketing process so that even though one is guilty one does not have to go before a judge. They are ticketed, they are fined, and they pay the fine.

However we must be very careful that process is not trivialized so that someone who is an offender does not say: "Well, that is fine. I will pay my ticket and I will go on". I think we must spend some time in the legislative committee to make sure that the regulations are written so that we take that into account. It is a useful tool that can be put in place, but we must be careful that it is used properly.

Another point that I feel should be questioned is the power provided to inspectors regarding the size of areas which they can declare as being infested. The area capable of being declared infested has a limit of time. It can be done for 90 days and, if it is to be extended, it has to be extended by the direction of the minister. However the size of the area is not dictated. That will be done depending on the situation which might arise.

I feel we have to be very careful. It could be the corner of a shed. It could be a farm. It could be a facility where plant material is being grown, being handled or passing through. The minister can revoke any inspector's declaration of infestation, in which case the place would cease to be infested. However we must ensure that standardized levels of service are provided across Canada so that