

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, in light of the comments made by the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), my great grandfather, who was a mineralogist in the Ottawa valley, would roll over in his grave if I did not stand up to support this amendment. He made his living in this way when nobody believed it was possible. The story in my family is that he once had a stake to Hemlow. I do not know what happened to it, so here I am.

I support the amendment and urge its support from those Members on the Government side of the House who have remained stangely silent during the recent debate in the House on the issue of gas prices. A number of those Members were very vocal on this issue during the election. I am thinking particularly of the Member for Duvernay (Mr. Della Noce) who promised that he would reduce the price of gasoline.

This amendment may not directly influence the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Miss Carney) because she is perhaps immovable. However, this is a measure on which ordinary Members can stand in the House and support an extension of a 3 cent a litre rebate directed toward specific occupations.

One such occupation is farming. We are aware of how farmers have been devastated by the continuing high price of gasoline and the fuel tax. Others who would benefit from this amendment include fishermen, hunters, trappers, loggers and miners.

There are Members on the government side who are concerned about the inequities in the current government policy on the price of gasoline. We know that the world price of oil is dropping while the cost in Canada continues to rise, with Petro-Canada as our game leader in the increase of the price per litre. Therefore, I urge those concerned Government Members to speak out and support this small amendment which only provides for a 3 cent per litre rebate. Those who are familiar with the agricultural sector know that 3 cents a litre means much to farmers who are teetering on the brink of bankruptcy.

We ask the Government to support such an extension so that farmers, fishermen, loggers, trappers and hunters can get a small break when it is obvious that other consumers will not.

I notice that one distinguished Hon. Member from Newfoundland is in the House today. I know he would like to support this amendment because of his concern about the fishermen. Perhaps he can convince other members of his caucus that the fishermen should get a break of 3 cents a litre by extending the rebate beyond the period set by the Government.

The Hon. Member is a former sea-going man and knows the importance of the cost of fuel to fishermen. He should express his views to show his colleagues in the House as well as his constituents the importance of this issue. I urge him and other Members who have remained silent on the issue to speak out in defence of those constituencies that will be assisted by this specific amendment.

Excise Tax Act

If they remain silent, their campaign speeches in the next election will fall on deaf ears. For instance, the people who voted for the Hon. Member for Duvernay believed that he may occasionally speak against government policy in support of those issues in which he believed, such as lower gas prices. We have not seen that happen, and I urge those government Members who have constituency interests in the areas of farming, fishing, forestry and trapping to support this amendment which would give a break to those who really need a break in these tough times.

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to the House that the Hon. Member for Duvernay (Mr. Della Noce) did speak out on this issue in the House yesterday and, in fact, pointed out that in September, 1984, the price of gasoline in his City of Montreal was 59.9 cents a litre, but that even after increases in the present Budget and the legislation before the House, the price of gasoline in Montreal on January 28, 1986, had fallen to 58.3 cents a litre. The Hon. Member has been speaking out, as have other Members, and the Government's action has brought results in this matter.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, this is a limited amendment which would extend the present rebates on gasoline and diesel fuel tax for another year. One of the tacit assumptions made by provincial and federal Governments about these gasoline and diesel taxes is that they are used for two purposes. One is to raise revenues for the Government, and the other is to provide some disincentive to consumers using the non-renewable resource of gasoline or diesel fuel as a source of energy.

The point has been made that this disincentive may influence consumers who live in cities and those who run factories to switch to alternative sources of power, such as electricity generated by coal or the use of coal directly. However, there are some sectors which are very important to the Canadian economy that do not have access to this technology for an alternative source of energy. Therefore, farmers and fishermen must rely on gasoline and diesel powered machinery for their production, as do those who are engaged in trapping, logging and mining. They need machinery which enables them to move freely in isolated areas in order to explore for minerals, drill test holes or construct mine shafts. In order for the economy of the country to benefit from these types of commercial activities, which are the backbone of Canadian economic activity, we believe it is only fair that this particular rebate should continue for another year. Therefore, we propose that it continue at least until 1987.

[Translation]

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard-Anjou): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to say a few words in support of this motion, because to me it is appalling that a one-year extension is being denied our farmers, fishermen, hunters and miners who represent a segment of our population that truly needs it. They should be allowed one more year to claim those three cents per