

AND THIS YEAR'S DUBIOUS HONOUR GOES TO—



The Canadian Taxpayers Federation has issued the annual awards nobody wants: its yearly observance of the most wasteful spending of public funds.

"It's enough to bring you to tears," said Gregory Thomas, the federation's federal director.

The advocacy group presented a mock *Lifetime Achievement Award* to Bev Oda, former minister of international co-operation, who resigned in 2012 following a succession of apologies for misspending.

The federation cited Oda for "outrageous expenses" including \$17,000 in limousine rides in her first fifteen months in Cabinet; a billing for a \$665-a night room at London's Savoy hotel, including \$16 for a glass of room-service orange juice; a \$250 fine for smoking in her hotel room; and \$3,000 in limo rides while in the UK.

"\$3,000 for a private car to take her to an immunization

conference – and those limo rides cost enough money to immunize 2,000 kids," Thomas told reporters.

The federation's other federal nominees included:

- \$126 million in funding for the Senate, an institution "in dire need of reform or abolition," the group said;
- \$5 million in funding from Western Economic Diversification Canada for hemp processor Genesis of Waskada, Man.: "Less than a year after doling out the money under the guise of Canada's Economic Action Plan, the 25,000 sq.ft. processing plant is empty and hasn't been used once";
- \$826,000 in funding by the Department of Agriculture to a Brampton, Ont., firm, Cardinal Meat Specialists, to "develop an explosion-free sausage."

The taxpayers' advocacy group described its awards as a public shaming intended to reduce misspending of taxpayers' funds.



PAUL DELAHANTY

MPS SILENT ON SPILL WARNING

A parliamentary committee has opted not to question regulators over warnings Canada is unprepared for a major Atlantic oil spill.

MPs rejected a motion to question executives of the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board, and its counterpart in Newfoundland & Labrador. "I want to get this on the record," said Liberal MP Ted Hsu, who sponsored the motion.

The Commons' Standing Committee on Natural Resources voted down Hsu's motion without comment.



"I thought normally there might be debate on this important issue," said Hsu, MP for Kingston and the Islands, Ont.

"As parliamentarians we should be looking in-depth at these issues," Hsu added. "When authorities point out work that needs to be done, it is Parliament's job to ask questions."

The federal Commissioner of the Environment earlier warned both boards lack adequate plans in event of a catastrophic oil spill in Atlantic waters.

Commissioner Scott Vaughan, in his 2012 *Fall Report*, described the two regulatory boards' emergency plans as uncoordinated, "inconsistent," incomplete and untested.

In recent testimony to the Senate finance committee, Commissioner Vaughan went further in stressing the boards "need to do more to prepare for a major oil spill."

"We identified several deficiencies that limit the offshore boards' ability to take over the response should operators fail to respond appropriately to a major oil spill," said Vaughan. "For example, the boards and federal entities have not tested their collective plans or joint capacity, and roles and responsibilities are not always clear in their response plans."

MP Hsu had proposed that Parliament summon executives of the Nova Scotia and Newfoundland boards to address the findings, and report back to the House of Commons within ninety days.

"If something bad happens in one part of the industry, it is bad for the whole industry," said Hsu.

Committee chairman Leon Benoit, Conservative MP for Vegreville-Wainwright, Alta., would not take *Blacklock's* questions.



STAFF