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Feds urge transport powers for Games

The federal government wants more power to stop trucks and trains from transporting dangerous materials near Olympic Games sites.

Officials say the powers are required to respond to any terrorist threats or intelligence received during the 2010 Games. At a moment's notice, federal authorities could need to stop trucks transporting materials such as chlorine on the Sea to Sky highway along Vancouver's coastline or keep materials away from the Olympic Stadium. Transport Canada spokesman Peter Coyles raised the alarm during a committee meeting with MPs yesterday.

"There would be significant impact on the Olympics if this bill doesn't go ahead," he said.

Liberal transport critic Joe Volpe doesn't buy the hype.

"If we had to wait 10 months before the opening of the Games to think about transporting dangerous goods into Whistler and lower mainland, we're fried," he said.

Volpe believes the Olympic Games are being exploited as an excuse to ram through a bill that could force the federal government to accept U.S. security standards in the name of conformity.

The Conservative government wants Canadian truck drivers who go back and forth across the border to undergo only one security check. Right now, drivers must go through both a Canadian and an American clearance process. And if the U.S. says no, there is no appeal.

Drivers who don't cross the border, but drive explosive materials within Canada would also have to undergo a security check.

Transport Minister John Baird is travelling to Washington later this spring and said he hopes to convince lawmakers there to accept a made-in-Canada security check system.