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## Disabled Nortel workers fear bill will die

By **SCOTT TAYLOR, OTTAWA SUN**

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The frustration continues for a group of disabled former Nortel employees that is accusing the Harper government of stonewalling a bill that would give them a larger portion of their disability benefits.

Bill C-624, introduced by Liberal MP Mark Eyking, would amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to protect employees on long-term disability by granting them preferred status during bankruptcy proceedings.

A private member's bill tabled by Sen. Art Eggleton that would have forced the company to fully compensate them was defeated by the Conservatives. The new bill has the support of the Liberals, NDP and the Bloc Quebecois.

However, it appears that it also won't garner any support from the Tories, likely assuring it a quick death.

Eyking said he believed the bill would pass because it wouldn't require any taxpayer money.

But the Conservatives claim it will cause a landslide of litigation.

Independent financial analyst Diane Urquhart, who has championed the workers' cause, said Tuesday that the Tories are objecting to it for the same reason they killed the previous bill. But that clause, she claimed, has been eliminated.

"There was a debate on March 11 in the House and while there was no vote, what essentially happened was the Conservatives indicated they would not support the bill for all the same reasons the Senators did not support (the previous bill)," she said. "They did not give a single fact or evidence to support their reasons."

Conservative MP Mike Lake, who attended the March 11 meeting in place of Industry Minister Tony Clement, was not immediately available for an interview.

scott.taylor@sunmedia.ca

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