

Municipal Development and Loan Act

result, construction work corresponding to perhaps \$50 million and covering some 200 to 300 separate loans will not be completed until after March 31.

• (11:10 a.m.)

The act has fulfilled its main purpose, and it is not intended to propose any addition to the \$400 million of funds made available or any extension beyond March 31, 1966 in the date by which projects must be approved.

As hon. members are aware, strong representations have been made to the government to extend the date for the calculation of forgiveness, most recently by a delegation of provincial ministers and their representatives. The suggestions ranged from extension for a few months to indefinite extension. The government has been giving careful study to these representations and has been impressed by the evidence of the difficult financial situation which some of these municipalities will encounter if, because of circumstances beyond their control, they are unable to earn the forgiveness they had expected to earn before March 31, 1966.

On the other hand, the government has also had to take into account that some municipalities decided not to apply or were prevented by their provincial boards from applying because they would not be able to earn full forgiveness before March 31, 1966. The government has also been aware, and I have no hesitation in saying this, that some municipalities have no expectation of earning forgiveness and are taking advantage of the act for its favourable financing facilities only.

Taking all these conflicting factors into account, the government has decided that it will ask parliament for authority, by means of a vote in the supplementary estimates for 1966-67, to pay to municipal borrowers under this legislation such additional amounts of forgiveness payments as may be necessary as a result of extending the relevant termination date by six months. That is, I am proposing that the 25 per cent forgiveness payment should be made with respect to all project costs incurred up to and including September 30, 1966. This extension will probably require additional payments amounting to about \$12 million beyond those already contemplated.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps this might be a good moment for the Chair to unburden itself of a very weighty opinion prepared following the discussion in the house on Tuesday, February 15, when hon. members were invited to argue the point of order raised by the hon. member for

[Mr. Sharp.]

Cumberland (Mr. Coates). The Chair undertook to give a decision after considering the arguments submitted. I can assure hon. members that I have studied most carefully the several views expressed by those who participated in the discussion on the point of order.

As hon. members know, it has been the practice for some years that when a minister of the crown makes an announcement or a statement of government policy on motions, a spokesman for each of the parties in opposition to the government may comment briefly.

Beauchesne refers to this practice in citation 91 of his fourth edition. On February 1, 1954 Mr. Speaker Beaudoin stated that it was the practice of the house, when a minister makes a statement, to allow one spokesman for each opposition party to make observations, and he referred to a ruling in that regard made by his predecessor, Mr. Speaker Macdonald, on June 4, 1951.

Last year this practice was embodied in our rules and is now provisional standing order 15(2a), which reads as follows:

On motions, as listed in section (2) of this standing order, a minister of the crown may make an announcement or a statement of government policy. Any such announcement or statement should be limited to facts which it is deemed necessary to make known to the house and should not be designed to provoke debate at this stage. A spokesman for each of the parties in opposition to the government may comment briefly, subject to the same limitation.

In 1963 an amendment was brought to the Senate and House of Commons Act, which reads as follows:

There shall be paid to each member of the House of Commons, other than the Prime Minister or the member occupying the recognized position of Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, who is the leader of a party that has recognized membership of twelve or more persons in the House of Commons, an allowance at the rate of four thousand dollars per annum in addition to the sessional allowance payable to such member.

It has been suggested that provisional standing order 15(2a) should be interpreted in the light of the amendment to the Senate and House of Commons Act in 1963 and that this amendment should be a guide to the Speaker as to the procedure to be followed in the matter of comments on ministerial statements.

There is obviously some merit to this proposition. However, one should bear in mind the following principle of parliamentary procedure laid down in subsection 3 of citation 8 of Beauchesne's fourth edition:

In the interpretation of the rules, or standing orders, the house is generally guided not so much