

Government Orders

there are about 10 members from his own party who have petitions to present, the Chair would appreciate it if he would sort of try to cut it down in order to get everybody on.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

WAGE CLAIM PAYMENT ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Blais that Bill C-22, an act to enact the Wage Claim Payment Act, to amend the Bankruptcy Act and to amend other acts in consequence thereof, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations; and the amendment of Mr. Rodriguez (p. 4192).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I wish to inform the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 33(2)(b), because of ministerial statements Government Orders will be extended by 29 minutes.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas has 17 minutes plus 10 minutes for questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak today on Bill C-22 to enact the Wage Claim Payment Act and to amend the present Bankruptcy Act.

With the in-depth review given Bill C-22 by the committee I hope the government will pay serious attention to the recommendations which have been put forward. During the committee's hearings and when the government first introduced the bill, it became apparent that there is a general consensus in Canada that the present Bankruptcy Act is in need of reform. The time has more than come for changes to be made.

It is very unfortunate that we are witnessing record bankruptcies in Canada today. A revised Bankruptcy Act is needed more than ever before. It is also important to remember that the Bankruptcy Act can do much to save a business or individual from actually going bankrupt just as it deals with the regulations governing the process of bankruptcy.

In today's tough economic climate it is obvious that the present act is indeed inadequate. A modernized Bankruptcy Act is required, one which offers every reasonable avenue to prevent bankruptcies.

[Translation]

Bill C-22 is but the seventh attempt in 16 years to reform the Bankruptcy Act. The current legislation, which dates back to 1949, should have been amended a long time ago. Bill C-22 proposes eight main changes dealing with: wage protection, commercial reorganization, consumer proposals, secured creditors and receivers, Crown claims and priorities, protection of unpaid suppliers and, finally, technical provisions.

[English]

In dealing with these eight principal areas of bankruptcy law, Bill C-22 avoids an attempt to overhaul the entire Bankruptcy Act. Such an endeavour has proven to be difficult in the past and is perhaps one reason why the act has remained without serious amendment for so long a period.

We are at a stage now, as I alluded to earlier, that far too many bankruptcies have occurred in Canada. High unemployment, the recession, inadequate government measures to stimulate the economy, high interest rates, the goods and services tax and even cross-border shopping have taken their toll on businesses, especially small business.

The phenomenal growth in business and personal bankruptcies, especially in Ontario, is a significant indicator of the tough economic climate prevailing in Canada today. The number of bankruptcies have indeed been high.

In addition, when a business closes it often sets off a chain reaction. Not only are there job losses as a result of a bankruptcy of that particular business, sometimes other jobs in businesses which had dealings with the original firm are put at risk. Therefore, I am pleased that the reorganization amendments to the Bankruptcy Act contained in Bill C-22 provide more time for a business to prepare a reorganization strategy rather than have it forced to close its doors for good.

[Translation]

Bill C-22 would amend part III of the Bankruptcy Act by adding new general provisions to give insolvent persons time to prepare and negotiate a reorganization