

Depositors Compensation

He speaks of loss of confidence and the loss of trust in the Government because of this particular Bill. If western banks are viewed as not being as important as central Canadian banks that would lead to loss of trust and loss of confidence in this country in terms of unfairness.

My riding in London, Ontario is the home of many trust companies and insurance companies. One would think that my constituents would not be interested in the viability of western banks. They are. They believe that, for a united country which is fair to all regions, western banks are important to the fabric of the western economy just as, for example, financial institutions like Canada Trust are vital to the economy of southwestern Ontario. We stepped in and we recognized the importance of that in this legislation.

The Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry also discussed how delicate and how important the banking system is. That is precisely what we are addressing and what we have been addressing for the last few months with the Green Paper on financial institutions, with this legislation and with many other initiatives that this Government has taken in order to strengthen the confidence that people can have in our banking system.

This leads me to my final comment which is that if we follow the advice of the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry, and his leader, and reveal the names of all the depositors, what would that do to our banking system internationally? What would that do to our banking system and the confidence that people would feel in it? Confidentiality is the bedrock of the Bank Act and if we are going to change that we do not change it in the middle of some sort of episode like this. That is a matter that would have to be looked at systematically and properly, with proper advice. For the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry to insist that this confidentiality be removed, is to insist on particular action that would diminish confidence and trust in the banking system more than anything else.

It is because of all this that I join with the Minister of State for Finance (Mrs. McDougall) in saying that I as well have every faith in the viability and strength of the banking system in Canada and in its national and international reputation. This Bill, together with the inquiry by Mr. Justice Estey, will help to maintain that, and I commend to the House its speedy passage.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. Is the House ready for the question? The Hon. Member for Richmond-Wolfe (Mr. Tardif).

Mr. Alain Tardif (Richmond-Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, I also welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-79, An Act respecting the provision of compensation to depositors of Canadian Commercial Bank, CCB Mortgage Investment Corporation and Northland Bank in respect of uninsured deposits.

Upon reading this preamble or title of Bill C-79, some Canadians might be inclined to react by saying: That is a good idea, because if I were involved, I would like the Government to compensate me for the loss savings accumulated over 3, 4, 5, 10, 15 or 20 years.

However, Mr. Speaker, Bill C-79 does not in any way concern average depositors who are covered, up to a maximum of \$60,000, by the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation.

I may remind Hon. Members here in the House that \$60,000 is quite a lot of money. In fact, the vast majority of Canadians cannot hope to save that much in their entire lifetime. Sixty thousand dollars is a lot of money for most Canadians.

And now, not only does the Government want to compensate these people, something I entirely agree with, but it has introduced Bill C-79 in order to compensate all those depositors with accounts considerably in excess of \$60,000. In many cases, we are talking about depositors with accounts worth several hundred thousand dollars. And the Government is saying that we need this legislation to cover these fantastic sums of money in order to maintain confidence in the Canadian banking system!

Mr. Speaker, with respect, I cannot agree with this point of view or this philosophy, which I may say I find absolutely repugnant.

My hon. colleague who spoke previously said it was urgent that the House adopt Bill C-79 as soon as possible. I agree that if one shares his point of view, it is very important to act fast so as few Canadians as possible will realize what is happening to them. It is a shame that the Government would introduce such a Bill to provide assistance to people who are obviously very well off.

Such a program should not be implemented on the basis of simple statements and comments. The financial situation of Canada does not allow it. We cannot do certain things to improve our essential social programs, apparently because the Government cannot afford to do so. Yet, Bill C-79 asks the House to approve a blank cheque which will amount to several hundred million dollars.

My colleague from Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) has been fighting in this House for months and weeks to protect the most needy amongst Canadians, those who lack even the basic necessities. Yet, the Government replies: We must tighten our belts, we must reduce our expenditures and it is impossible to do what you are asking. If we ever succeed in reducing the deficit, we might do what you wish, Mr. Malépart.

On the one hand, that is the reply of the Government to the urgent request made by my colleague for Montréal-Sainte-Marie. This is one aspect of this Government's approach.