

Financial Institutions

No matter how hard we try, it is very difficult to legislate common sense. If an individual is determined to invest money, in the first instance that individual must assume some responsibility for checking out what it is that they are doing with that money. We can pass all the rules we like in Ottawa, but an investor who does not bother to read the big print, never mind the fine print, makes it very difficult for us as parliamentarians to save them harmless from all the things they might choose to do.

I am not going to repeat what a number of my colleagues have already said about the many ways in which the Government has and is strengthening and improving consumer protection. Nor will I reiterate the numerous problems and difficulties in implementing the Hon. Member's motion. Many of my colleagues have also pointed out that the Government has important and far-reaching plans for further improved protection, and they have adequately described those plans. I believe it would be a waste of your time, Mr. Speaker, and that of Members of the House to go over them one more time.

I would like to add my assurance that the Government has always, and will always, put the protection of Canadian consumers uppermost in its financial reform plans. We have also co-operated and consulted extensively with the provinces to better harmonize financial regulations across the country. This is consistent with what the Government has been saying about financial reforms since day one.

In the *Agenda for Economic Renewal* which was presented by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) shortly after we came to office, we discussed directions for change for the regulation of financial institutions. We stated: "The Government intends to respond by working with the provinces, the public and the financial community to ensure that legislation reflects the rapidly changing financial sector. Among the objectives must be the efficient delivery of financial services, while maintaining adequate protection for investors and savers, and intergovernmental harmonization of the regulatory framework".

● (1740)

If one reads the Government's original Green Paper on Financial Sector Reform, it is clear that protecting consumers has been a top priority for the Government. Indeed, on page 1 of that document the Government listed nine principles which would guide us in planning new directions for our financial sector. All nine principles were designed to ensure that the public would continue to have confidence in our financial sector while, at the same time, ensuring that the sector would remain strong and competitive internationally and could offer consumers more and better services.

Our number one principle was "To improve consumer protection"; as I said before, we have been consistent.

Our other eight principles were as follows: to strengthen the controls against self-dealing; to guard against abuses of conflict of interest; to design a financial sector policy that promotes competition in the sector, while enhancing innovation

and improving efficiency; to ensure that customers in the market-place will be able to choose from a wider array of options and new services and that the trend toward more convenience for consumers would continue; to broaden the sources of credit available to individuals and to businesses; to ensure and enhance the soundness and stability of the financial system; to promote the international competitiveness of our institutions while ensuring that they can continue to aid domestic economic growth; and, finally, to promote the harmonization of federal and provincial regulatory policies.

We have reiterated these principles and reaffirmed our commitment to them in the Blue Paper that we tabled in the House of Commons in December, 1986. We have been guided by these principles since.

It is clear that what the Hon. Member wants to achieve with his motion—and it is a laudable motion, namely better consumer protection and federal-provincial co-operation—is exactly what the Government is already working to achieve. Indeed, when he introduced his motion last February, the Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) pointed out that there may be better ways of dealing with the issue.

That remains to be determined. The Government is working energetically to find those safeguards. I had the privilege very recently of hosting the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. Hockin) in my constituency of Esquimalt—Saanich. During his visit I arranged meetings for him with the banking community, members of the co-operative institutions and members of the trust companies to review the safeguards that we are discussing here today.

Part of the meeting was spent with my MLA in the Province of British Columbia, who also happens to be the Minister of Finance in the provincial Government. We discussed at some length the various kinds of institutions and the measures that this motion proposes.

I congratulate the Member for bringing forward this idea. It has to be very seriously considered, but as part of an over-all comprehensive review. It is one thing for us to pass rules here; it is another matter to legislate common sense. People have signed documents and have unhappily found, to their sorrow, that they really did not read what they had signed and did not know what they were signing, so it is difficult for us as legislators to indemnify citizens from many of their own actions when they choose to invest their money.

Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to rise for a few minutes and speak on Motion No. 143 in the name of my friend and colleague from Kamloops—Shuswap. It points out again the importance of the Private Members' Hour. My friend opposite from Kamloops—Shuswap, I am sure, is setting a world record for the number of Bills that have been introduced to the Private Members' Hour. I know that that indicates his extreme personal interest in the Private Members' Hour because he certainly is setting an historic