

National Housing Act

● (2140)

If the hon. member for Calgary North has persuaded the minister that the chargeable amount should not be one half of 1 per cent but should be zero, I think that being a reasonable person I should move a further amendment, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow):

That the amendment be amended by deleting therefrom the words "one half" and by substituting therefor the phrase "one quarter".

The reason for that is, that if we accept the representation of the president of CMHC, Mr. Hueglin, that it costs one-eighth of 1 per cent to administer a loan, we should be as close to that figure as possible. I believe that one half of 1 per cent is too far distant. At least one quarter of 1 per cent is very close to one-eighth of 1 per cent, and I am sure that after the hon. member for Calgary North put forward his amendment, and after he said he would like to see the amount reduced to zero, which the NDP have proposed, he is prepared to agree that the figure should be as close as possible to what the president of CMHC says it costs, that is, one-eighth of 1 per cent. Therefore, I am sure the hon. member for Calgary North and members of the Conservative Party are persuaded that one-eighth of 1 per cent is better than one half of 1 per cent.

They have put into a motion an idea which will result in a saving to low-income people across the country. I am sure the people in Newfoundland, people in the Maritimes and people in the depressed areas of Quebec will give full credit to the Progressive Conservative Party for bringing forth this idea concerning low-income people as related to some of the social housing policies of the government. We in the NDP will take only a small amount of credit for reducing the amount from one half of 1 per cent to one quarter of 1 per cent because we have been told by the president of CMHC that the cost of administering a loan is roughly one-eighth of 1 per cent. Having said that, I doubt it is necessary for me to continue because I am sure members of the Conservative Party are fully persuaded and will vote the right way when the amendment is put.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I presume the intent of the hon. member is that the subamendment, if carried, apply to the different motions that we are now considering. Am I correct?

Mr. Gilbert: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will now hear, no doubt, representations on the point of order that is bound to arise.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I think there is a point of order. On the evidence of the president of the corporation, to reduce this to one quarter of 1 per cent is a charge on the public purse. By the time the costs of the Department of Finance are taken into account, and the costs of CMHC, one quarter of 1 per cent is a cost on the public purse which is not covered by the royal recommendation. However, I am quite happy to argue the merits of the subamendment.

[Mr. Gilbert.]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I submit that the minister, by making that assertion, has not in fact made his point. He may argue that cutting this figure from one half of 1 per cent to one quarter of 1 per cent may result in fewer dollars coming to the public treasury, but since one quarter of 1 per cent is still above the estimated cost of one-eighth of 1 per cent, no charge on the treasury is involved. I submit therefore that so far as that part of the rule is concerned, the amendment should be considered to be in order.

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we heard the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) make a very sound remark that the art of politics is to make possible what seems impossible.

This is perfectly sound, but if we were to begin by making possible what is possible, I think that it would be even more so. Now, I have listened with great interest to the interventions—

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I take it the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) is not speaking to the point of order but to the substance of the motion before us. The Chair would ask for a moment to consider the point of order that has been raised.

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to express—

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope the hon. member for Bellechasse will excuse the Chair, but the Chair needs a moment to reflect upon the point of order presented by the subamendment of the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Gilbert).

The minister has helped the Chair immeasurably by not pressing the point with regard to the royal recommendation in relation to the subamendment offered by the hon. member for Broadview. In my opinion, the main question before us is as to what charge should be levied in connection with the moneys that are raised and used for the several purposes set forth in the act that we are considering.

To my mind, the principle that we are considering is the spread between the cost of borrowing and lending, and what is charged then becomes a detail. The hon. member for Calgary North with, I gather, the support of the minister, is of the opinion that one half of 1 per cent is the appropriate figure. The hon. member for Broadview and certain other hon. members believe that that spread should be one quarter of 1 per cent. It seems to me that it is not a question of reaching into the principle of the amendment but, rather, a question as to detail. For that reason I find that the subamendment is in order.

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, may I speak briefly, before ten o'clock, on the merits of the amendment to the amendment moved by the hon. member for Calgary North and supported by the hon. member for Peel South (Mr. Blenkarn) in a very responsible way.