

*Government Orders*

However, we do not think that the employees or anyone else petitioning someone into bankruptcy in order to seize the assets should be forced to pay the cost of environmental cleanup in order to be able to access their owed wages. After all their owed wages are just that, they are wages that are owed to them. That is one other area that our committee addressed, again with a remarkable degree of unanimity.

We were talking about this whole business of unpaid suppliers. Our committee unanimously approved of the government's plan for the revindication of goods. However, upon looking at it, we came to the conclusion that the plan in the bill does not work. It is a technical flaw in the bill because there is a 30-day provision for revindication of goods but someone has 10 days after the bankruptcy or forced liquidation to actually initiate that claim.

That is fine except that in the cases of receivership there is also a possibility for the owner of the insolvent organization to file a proposal in order to try and keep it going. If that happens those two dates work together and the revindication of goods could be nullified 100 per cent of the time. While not changing what the government wants to do, we have provided a number of dates and a number of steps which actually cause this procedure to work. We invite the government to look at it. I know it is studying it. I think the officials in the department have agreed with us that the bill as presently worded will not work and that we need some sort of amendment such as the one we have offered or another one that is slightly different, not necessarily married to that principle, that will actually make it work.

There is another concern as well with the 10 day period. My colleague from Dartmouth and I have looked at this and have actually come up with a scenario in which during a 10 day period, depending on the time of the year, there are actually only three working days.

I invite the minister to look at that, particularly the Christmas period. If a company were to become insolvent just a few days, or one day, before Christmas, the 10 day period in some years may in fact have only three days. How could anyone get organized to revindicate goods or do anything else that must be done in the 10 day period?

The revindication of goods provision is only one of the provisions that has that 10 day feature. There are a number of others as well.

We bring that to the attention of the minister but our report has addressed that in a number of places and his officials should examine that.

We are trying to be constructive in our approach. I think all members want this new bill to work, if and when we do get it. We want wage earners to be protected. We want suppliers to be able to revindicate their goods so they do not come out the losers, as they do now.

[*Translation*]

And of course, the minister himself represents an agricultural riding and is also the Minister of State for Agriculture. He must know that some farmers sell their whole annual production in a single sale; that is, one fine day, a truck comes and takes everything produced in a year, corn from one farm, livestock from another, and so on. Much of the year's income could be from a single transaction. If, for example, a truck took all of a farmer's cattle to the slaughterhouse, which went broke the next day, he should be able to go and see his cattle on location and of course reclaim what is his. In that regard, we all agree with what the minister intends to do. Of course, we want the procedure to work even better. The minister is himself a lawyer and represents a Quebec riding and as I said earlier, he knows very well that such a measure exists in certain cases in Quebec's Civil Code. We want Canadians who live in other parts of the country to enjoy the same or even better protection.

[*English*]

I must express disappointment with the position of the minister and the government that it does not want to abolish Crown priorities.

This is a modern way of looking at this bill. If we are going to do this right we should be giving the priority to the employees not to the tax collector. At least that should not be the first priority.

There is a proviso to what I am going to say and the minister should pay attention to it very closely. We said in our recommendation that an unpaid debt to the Crown should not be utilized against a third party.