

Municipal Development and Loan Board

great deal of additional employment and they are required to be financed, they could be considered.

Mr. Gregoire: Just a few words on the matter which is very well illustrated in this clause. When I look at the French version of the bill I see subclause 1 (b) and a sentence covering 30 lines without any punctuation at all. It is very difficult to read the French version and to understand what is meant. I am sometimes in close contact with members of the civil service, employees of the unemployment insurance commission and other boards in my constituency, and I can well understand why they have so many difficulties in settling problems raised by people. It is because the law is written in such a way that they themselves have difficulty in understanding it. I should like to suggest that the minister or the Minister of Justice should instruct those who draft the bill to write them much more clearly and not insert sentences of 30 lines without any punctuation mark. I think this is too long for anyone to understand it. That is my point, if the Acting Minister of Finance would transmit it to the people who write the bills.

Mr. Sharp: I will be happy to do so. I can assure the hon. gentleman that I find the English difficult to read and it is very much more difficult for me to read the French language, which does not happen to be my forte at all.

Mr. Francis: Mr. Chairman, I think that this clause is the very heart of the bill before us and I should like to make two general comments, one concerning the municipalities which I suspect will eventually be able to profit from the bill, and the second concerning the problems raised by the reference to municipal transit systems as being the type of project which might be approved. The hon. member for Renfrew South yesterday raised before the house the problems of many of the smaller municipalities, and in many cases, as in part of my own riding, they coincide with depressed areas. The smaller municipalities are limited in their investment, and my hon. colleague cited the case of a township in his riding with a total assessment of \$160,000. I have a number in my riding with less than \$1 million total assessment. They are limited by the municipal board of the province which puts forward the 20 per cent rule as the absolute limit on borrowings. In many cases these municipalities are already in excess of the limit of the provincial municipal board. The type of municipality which my colleague was concerned with is not likely to receive very much latitude from the provincial municipal board.

The presumption in many cases was that the larger municipalities would be the first to benefit. The city of Ottawa, for example, has a ratio of debt to assessment, with full adjustment for public buildings owned by the government of Canada in arriving at the assessment figure, of 27 per cent. That is already substantially in excess of the amount permitted to be borrowed as a maximum under the rule of thumb by the municipal board. There is a serious question whether this kind of municipality which has already borrowed so heavily could do much to take advantage of the legislation such as is proposed.

I think there is a special difficulty faced by municipalities outside large metropolitan areas. I am thinking of townships such as Nepean, North Gower and March and Goulburn. These townships are rapidly finding that the spill-over of metropolitan growth is creating a rate of expansion in their areas in excess of their financial capacity to bear. The problem is not just one of capital cost, though that in itself is serious enough. Townships such as these do not have diversified assessments and they are severely limited in their applications before the municipal board. The municipal board has introduced a system of quotas with respect to applications from such townships in an attempt to limit expansion, and this reflects the difficulty which they are experiencing.

A board which was aware of this problem could do a great deal by calling the attention of provincial authorities to special areas where problems are arising. One might say that this is not the business of the federal government, but I think a quiet, helpful suggestion could often be made. There is a serious question in my mind whether provincial authorities are giving sufficient attention to the larger metropolitan areas. This reflects a situation which, partly, arises in this house where the large growing areas are not adequately represented but where the smaller and medium sized areas which for a long time have had stability of population are over-represented. The municipal boards in many provinces are not paying attention to the problems of the smaller municipalities which border on the large metropolitan areas. I am concerned that the clause does not take this problem into account and I hope it would be possible in discussion with the provincial authorities to take note of it. I hope we shall not find ourselves in a situation where the only municipalities which could benefit would be those who least need assistance. The very small ones with heavy unemployment will experience difficulty. The very large ones which have been trying to do a good job in response to the pressure upon them will find themselves seriously limited. So a great deal