

*Government Orders*

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that all bankers want is not to do anything that could increase the risk even marginally. It would seem that, in the event of a bankruptcy, it is alright for everyone else to lose anything, but that bankers can take absolutely no chance.

[English]

Let us compare what I have just said about bankers and the Chamber of Commerce that are against the super priority with the following letter that I have received. It reads:

Dear Mr. Boudria:

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business wishes to express our congratulations for your recent work on the parliamentary committee studying the bankruptcy legislation.

The decision to recommend a super priority of wage claims rather than the payroll tax is certainly welcome by the small business community.

That letter is signed by Bill Parsons, director of national affairs, Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

I say to the minister: He has the bankers on one side and the Chamber of Commerce, although I always have difficulty understanding where it is coming from most of the time, and on the other side he has the Canadian Federation of Independent Business telling us that this unanimous recommendation of our committee to have a super priority is the right approach, that it is the right way to go. That is the recommendation we have.

Furthermore, on the premiums, this whole business of a payroll tax, I bring to your attention a letter which was sent to our committee by His Worship Al Duerr, mayor of the city of Calgary. It says:

The city of Calgary and all other municipalities will be liable for paying this tax because it is extremely unlikely that the city of Calgary or any other municipality in Canada will ever go bankrupt. No municipality should be required to pay this tax—

The letter goes on to describe how this tax is unfair against municipal governments. Hospitals have made the same kind of representation. I have indicated to the minister that small business has made that kind of representation favouring super priority over a payroll tax.

• (1840)

The minister should look at this again. It will be going to committee very soon. We only have a dozen or so more speakers and then it will be going to committee. It is at that time that the minister should consider and reconsider what he has indicated, at least verbally, that he is not willing to consider that kind of an amendment.

This is not just an amendment proposed by one far-out member of the opposition, if that is what someone on the government side thinks. This is a unanimous recommendation of our committee. Government members, opposition members, members of the third party, everyone was unanimous about that provision. The minister and his parliamentary secretary should remember that.

Had it been merely a recommendation from the Liberal Party that in itself would have been good enough. However, in the unlikely event that the government thought this might have been a purely partisan motion, it was not. It was one that was bipartisan, made by both sides of the House. It enjoyed the unanimous support of everyone on our committee.

There are several other provisions that our committee addressed in this pre-study. For instance we addressed a recommendation that the government investigate ways to reimburse arrears of wages of employees whose employers are insolvent and have walked away from their business where bankruptcy receivership or liquidation has not been initiated.

One of the problems is that there are instances where someone just physically leaves everything there. In many cases, there is also a little environmental disaster, such as a bunch of barrels of chemicals that were buried or some other mess left behind when the people walk away. There is a tremendous concern for anyone to petition an organization like that into bankruptcy. If you do, what happens if you inherit those assets and the mess that is there which you might have to clean up.

Incidentally there was another recommendation by our committee regarding environmental cleanups. Our committee was very concerned and wanted any environmental disaster or mess to be cleared up as soon as possible.