

*Small Businesses Loans Act*

**Mr. Speaker:** For the record, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to the understanding that, there being unanimous consent, the matter shall be dealt with in that way.

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard-Anjou)** moved:

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-23 be amended in Clause 2 by striking out line 4 at page 3 and substituting the following therefor:

"not more than fifteen years;"

[*Translation*]

He said: The rationale for this amendment, Mr. Speaker, is that small businesses are often faced with rather stiff loan repayments, especially in the first years, and if the term were extended from 10 to 15 years their payments would be considerably lower, their cash flow would be more manageable, and it would be easier for them to keep operating, particularly in the first years.

**Hon. André Bissonnette (Minister of State (Small Businesses)):** Mr. Speaker, the average repayment period is now 54 months or four and a half years. Since the term proposed under this Bill is 10 years, I fail to see the need to extend it to 15 years when the average repayment period is less than half that. I would therefore suggest, Mr. Speaker, that 15 years would be too long and that 10 years as proposed are quite sufficient.

• (1110)

[*English*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The question is on Motion No. 2 standing in the name of the Hon. Member for Saint-Léonard-Anjou (Mr. Gagliano). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour please say yea.

**Some Hon. Members:** Yea.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed please say nay.

**Some Hon. Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion, the nays have it.

**Some Hon. Members:** On division.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion lost on division. Motion (Mr. Gagliano) negatived.

**Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard-Anjou)** moved:

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-23, be amended in Clause 2 by striking out lines 8 to 10 at page 4 and substituting the following therefor:

"amount of the loan."

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-23, be amended in Clause 5 by striking out lines 7 to 13 at page 5.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-23, be amended in Clause 5 by striking out lines 12 at page 5.

[*Translation*]

He said: Mr. Speaker, those amendments are necessary because, according to the Bill as it is now worded, the Minister might change the clause at any time and substitute 2 or 5 per cent for 1 per cent, or else, say under Clause 5, he would be empowered to make changes without parliamentary approval.

If we believe in a strong Parliament properly vested with decision-making powers, I would suggest that the Minister enjoys enough discretion to administer the Act as it is. In our opinion, those amendments would deny the Minister the additional powers he seems to be seeking.

**Mr. Bissonnette:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, every year the committee will have an opportunity to examine our annual report. I must table a financial statement in the House and it is automatically referred to the committee. I do not see the relevance of the Hon. Member's question. Besides, the subclause is essential if I am to provide information to borrowers. In any event, this is not a new clause since it is already in the legislation, and I would ask that it be considered under Motion No. 5. I suggest that it remain unchanged, and the same thing applies to Motion No. 6. These clauses are required if the act is to be properly administered.

[*English*]

**Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the amendment put by my colleague. I think it makes a lot of sense to ensure that Parliament continues its role as final decision-maker.

I listened with interest to the Minister's comments about the report coming before the committee each year. There can be a lot of reports, but that does not necessarily change the way that the Government of the day operates. Therefore, on behalf of my caucus I would indicate my support for the amendment.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bissonnette:** As you know, Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is for small businesses, and small businesses are subject to very swift fluctuations.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I regret to interrupt the Minister, but he may not take the floor at this stage since he has already spoken.