

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Forseth:** Who pays?

**Mr. Gilmour:** The taxpayer pays. Let me make that perfectly clear to members on the government side because there was a great deal of confusion with government members on the Reform position on the bill. We are not advocating an end to CMHC mortgage insurance. We are saying that \$100 billion worth of liability is enough. The government does not need to add another \$50 billion in liabilities.

• (1825)

The fact that the government is asking for the additional liability to be retroactive to 1994 indicates that CMHC has already overextended its liability limits. Canadians should be concerned that CMHC needs to increase its liability funds, not only because there is no guarantee outstanding liabilities will not cost taxpayers but because there are obvious problems with government management of CMHC programs and funding.

I mentioned earlier that CMHC does not know what its outstanding liabilities are. This should concern many Canadians because CMHC does not appear to be keeping records of its outstanding liabilities to the expiry of its term 10, 15 or 20 years into the future.

To illustrate, access to information requests reveal, first, that CMHC does not have records of how much money it has forgiven under its residential rehabilitation assistance program. Second, it does not keep records of past contracts, only of current contracts. Third, it has no centralized records of the financial subsidy amounts and operating agreements for many of its programs, including its public housing program. Fourth, no centralized records were kept of moneys going into its aboriginal programs, which is a major component of CMHC. This is only the tip of the iceberg.

If the government through CMHC is to be doling out money and insuring loans, surely it should keep track of what it is spending, how much it owes and how much it is liable for. If the corporation cannot keep track of its fiscal activities, we should not be increasing its liabilities, especially by another \$50 billion. This is not only irresponsible, it is absolutely ridiculous, particularly when we consider our debt situation.

The bill is not only a step toward deeper fiscal uncertainty. It is clearly a move in the wrong direction. The government should not be leaning toward a greater federal role in housing but rather toward a more decentralized government role.

Whatever happened to the Prime Minister's promise to decentralize federal powers? It has obviously gone out the window with many other Liberal promises.

Canadians do not want a bloated federal government. They do not want the federal government meddling in every level of provincial, municipal and private enterprise affairs. Canadians want a leaner, more efficient federal government.

The minister responsible for CMHC claims that his department is moving toward a smaller organization. Yet if the federal government is downsizing and moving away from the housing market, why is it asking for another \$50 billion in mortgage money? It does not fit.

This will not downsize federal responsibilities. On the contrary, it will strengthen and increase the federal role. It is time for the federal government to realign its responsibilities with other governments. Canadians are taxed beyond belief from all levels of government. They have simply had enough.

The federal government is long overdue in easing out of a number of responsibilities duplicated at the provincial level. Canadians want a clear separation of responsibility between levels of government. They want a shift of power away from bureaucrats toward the people who pay for the programs in the first place. Canadians want an end to federal interference in the private sector. They do not want or need big brother meddling in their affairs, and Bill C-108 allows CMHC to significantly increase its presence in the mortgage market.

It is time for the government to allow private industry to do what it does best: offer consumers competitive mortgage rates. It is time for the government to stop interfering in the housing industry. Canadians want a clear separation of responsibility between levels of government and they want responsibility toward the people.

• (1830)

It is time for the government to get out of the face of private industry. Reformers are saying we do not want an increase of the \$50 billion. We are not saying CMHC should get out of the market, but \$50 billion is too much and because of that we will oppose this bill.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, many petitions have been submitted in the House since this government took office, and several of them, from all over the country, concerned social housing.

I personally submitted a number of such petitions. The former Conservative government gradually withdrew from the social housing sector by adopting various measures.

In 1989, it withdrew from the rental housing rehabilitation program. In 1992, it took another devastating measure in that it reduced by 21 per cent the number of new housing units. In 1993, it ended the long term financing of new low-cost housing