

Supply

government has done, especially in a province like mine with the cap on CAP.

It has been an incredibly difficult situation. A province which has traditionally been counted on to pull us through difficult periods like this has had the double-barrelled effect of not only being hit by the cap on the CAP but also having an NDP provincial government which just does not know how to deal with reality at all.

In the final sentence of this opposition motion the NDP say it is going to have a plan that will ensure job creation and prosperity for Canadians. As I listened to the members of the New Democratic Party today, I could not believe how little focus there was on the role that small business would play in creating those jobs.

The fact of the matter is that the greatest hope for new job creation in this country lies with the small business community. Most of our larger corporations are downsizing. They are restructuring and they are all laying off. Any new jobs that have been created, as well as 80 per cent of the jobs that are in existence today, are created through the small business sector. I could not help but notice the fact that the NDP just does not understand that is where the real emphasis should be in terms of any kind of an economic recovery plan.

We in the Liberal Party have strong views. We have taken a very strong position traditionally in our support for small and medium-sized business. Three weeks ago when the government put forward its Small Businesses Loans Act we stood up in this House and supported that bill going through the House in record-breaking time. The government made a commitment on that day that it would promote the Small Businesses Loans Act, that it would make sure that all the financial institutions and all of the small businesses in the country knew about that specific plan.

It is a good piece of legislation. I give the Minister of Finance credit for the idea that the government back small businesses loans to the tune of 90 per cent on loans up to \$250,000 for businesses with sales of \$5 million or less. This government does not even know how to take advantage of a good idea. It just sits over there and does not act on this particular idea.

The government sees that must be the area that needs support and enhancement. Three weeks after debating it in this House, it has not done a thing in terms of making the public aware. Some will say it has not had Royal Assent. I have seen dozens of initiatives in this House where the government has spent taxpayers' money promoting initiatives on second reading. Why will it not do that when it comes to small business?

When you have an initiative like that and you miss the opportunity, it makes me very suspicious of the real intent of that particular piece of legislation. Perhaps it was meant to be a bit of packaging in a budget. When it comes to having the actual law tested, it is not working.

I am disturbed about this. In the last two weeks in my own community, and I have heard from other communities across the country, people are going into their banks and they are not having any luck in getting any support from the Small Businesses Loans Act. I said three weeks ago that I am going to be on this issue until the government does something about it. I cannot for the life of me figure it out.

Going back to the NDP resolution, we have listened to New Democrats speak here today. Where is the thrust in their plan for small business? I will tell you.

• (1745)

They could not even come up with a thrust for small business. In the province of Ontario just six months ago, against the wishes of 95 per cent of the small business community, they introduced Bill 40 which practically crushed the spirit of most small businessmen in the province of Ontario. There is a little bit of a contradiction. In other words, in the province of Ontario they bring in their Bill 40 which works against the spirit of small business. They are being consistent today by not really living up to a concrete thrust.

Let me go back to the actual words in this legislation where they talk about abrogating the Canada-U.S. free trade deal. Where are we coming from? When you have a trading relationship of almost \$240 billion would you not give the trading partner some benefit of the doubt that you had enough intelligence and enough give and take in your negotiations that some of the things that were meaningful for us as a country might be sold or might be implemented in terms of their attitude?