

Small Business

the content of the motion. This motion gives the minister and his department a chance to speak on behalf of the government, to present their views and to let the people know that a great many of us have grave concerns for small business in Canada today. We feel that it should be given every possible incentive to help it.

● (1742)

I am pleased to speak on this topic, not just from the isolated position of a member of parliament but because prior to coming to the House of Commons I operated a small business in a small village in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. Thus I am aware of the many problems that exist. Of course, similar problems are faced by colleagues in the same type of business in which I was engaged, that of general insurance and real estate. A great deal of the credit for giving assistance to small business and also for speaking on behalf of small business can be given to the Progressive Conservative party.

I certainly feel that our party can be classified as the party really beating the drum for small business. It is only logical for the Progressive Conservative party to follow this course considering the enormous contribution that the small business sector makes to our economy. Approximately 55 per cent of all businesses in Canada can be classed as small businesses. It is a well endowed source of revenue for the government. Of course, the government has seen fit to ignore this important section of our economy, perhaps not entirely, but certainly it has not given it its due place in the sun. I consider the small business sector to be the backbone of our economy. If the government took heed and implemented some of the sound economic proposals contained in the motion, the smallscale business sector could provide the remedy to our economic ills, give hope to the unemployed, and restore some balance to our lopsided international trade account.

Because of the important role it plays in our economy, not too long ago the government saw fit to establish the Ministry of State for Small Business. I would like to underscore and strongly support the suggestion contained in the motion to establish a "small business secretariat" which would be independent of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. This proposal will not require any further expansion but would be merely a transfer in the status of importance attached to the small business sector.

A small business secretariat will serve as a conduit to many businessmen who currently spend costly time trying to untangle themselves from government red tape or desperately trying to free themselves from the quagmire of government's stifling procedures affecting small businesses. Quite bluntly, Mr. Speaker, it will help the operator against the familiar "run-around", a commodity that the government dispenses so abundantly, whether in calling an election or providing solutions to our economic problems.

I was pleased to hear the minister mention that the secretariat is open and that there is a Zenith line where small businessmen can call in without cost. I hope that a good many

of them will take advantage of that facility. I understand the minister gave the telephone number, but for the record again it is Zenith 03200. If anyone has problems let us hope they will call in. If they do not get answers from the secretariat, I hope that they will then contact their local members to intercede on their behalf.

The small business sector comprises firms operating in a variety of industries ranging from tourism to construction and from farming to manufacturing. Since I represent the picturesque riding paradise of Parry Sound-Muskoka, it behooves me to focus attention on small business operators in the tourist trade. Tourist trade immediately conjures up images of small scale operators. This is rightly so. Tourist trade is synonymous with small scale business. The plight of the tourist facility operators is a miserable reflection of the lack of concern that the government has shown in lending a sympathetic ear to the small business sector in the past.

It is well to note that in spite of our economic woes, tourism is one of the areas with the greatest potential for regenerating and fuelling our blighted economy. It is worth noting that tourism is now the sixth largest earner of foreign revenues for Canada. I may further add that travel in Canada is a \$10 billion industry, but regrettably statistics also reveal that our travel habits have plunged us into close to a \$2 billion deficit. Tourism expenditures in Canada provide employment for about one million people and the total annual investment is around \$1.5 billion. Over \$5 billion is poured into government coffers. In the province of Ontario it is the second largest generator of export dollars, exceeded only by the automobile industry.

I have briefly outlined the importance of the tourist industry to our economy and I repeat that this industry is comprised of small scale businesses. At this stage, Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose a simple but realistic question. Why has the government failed to recognize the importance of this industry? Is it because it is operated by a large number of small businesses? Why is the area of tourism cuddled up in some nook in the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce? I will take the liberty of further suggesting that the motion call for the establishment of an independent department of tourism. This is not a call to expand the bureaucracy but merely to transfer personnel from the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce to an independent unit.

This would facilitate the efficient handling of matters affecting the numerous operators who contribute to the tourist industry. It would also provide for some serious studies to be conducted in order to grapple with one of the fastest growing industries which may become the most important revenue earner for Canada in the not too distant future.

We need to do some long-range thinking. The role that tourism can play in eliminating our dismal and lopsided balance of payments account is certainly worth considering. Too little has been done to generate enthusiasm and to tap foreign markets so as to entice people from abroad to visit our beautiful and friendly land. Think for a moment of the tremendously favourable impact such a move could have on