priority than providing assistance and encouragement to our young people entering the job market?

I wonder if I could put a question on their behalf to the hon. minister to help explain to them why $4 billion—actually it is more than that—on attack helicopters is a greater priority than helping young students after they graduate in those critical few years as they try to get back on their feet.

Mr. Hockin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for his question. The changes that are being made here to the Canada Student Loans Act are precisely to help the student by removing the administration fee while they are in university, while they are in college. That is when they need the help.

We have removed the 3 per cent fee in an attempt to capture them at student age so that they would not be burdened with the fee when attending an institution. The philosophy of the bill is to make sure that students are not burdened with that 3 per cent fee while they are in college.

I know the hon. member agrees with that change. We have done this in order to underline the importance of young people in our economy and the importance of education.

As for attack helicopters, I think the hon. member believes in search and rescue. He believes in policing our fishery zones to make sure that foreign fleets are not catching fish there, to make sure that international agreements with respect to fish are complied with, and to look after that now that over eight countries have nuclear submarines.

The hon. member is an intelligent member of Parliament. We have these frigates but they cannot do anything without helicopters. He knows that. If we do not have helicopters we might as well not build the frigates. Once we have these helicopters we will have the greatest range of any country in terms of policing the seas. We will have the safest vehicles to make sure that search and rescue can happen properly.

All of this builds a greater country. It builds jobs and helps the young people to whom he refers.

• (1340)

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I am referring to the minister's media release of either today or yesterday, wherein he urged the banks to loosen their purse strings toward small business.

My concern is that this may be put to the Canadian Bankers' Association but I am not convinced financial institutions will follow through. As the minister knows, a lot of the branch offices of these financial institutions are working on memos from head office. Right now credit for small business has been very tough. This media release is a total about-face in terms of the direction the minister is giving to the banks. They have not been supplying credit generously to small business and he is giving them an instrument to make it a lot easier.

What type of accountability will the minister put in place to make sure that what is in this press release actually happens?

Mr. Hockin: Mr. Speaker, that is a very responsible question. I met this morning with the Canadian Bankers' Association to put in place the mechanism to which the member refers.

It is fine to have a Small Businesses Loans Act. Hopefully we will pass this bill and will have a higher ceiling in place. After that we will want the banks to pick it up and use it by giving people loans.

They confirmed to me this morning that they are to do a major advertising campaign on this issue. They are also to get head office to instruct the account managers in every branch to take it seriously. They have also told me today—and the member can discuss it with them directly if he wants—that they are to have a major advertising campaign to try to heighten the awareness of small business in all major chartered banks.

They also told me that there has not been much take-up of these possibilities by the credit unions, the trust companies and the insurance companies. They can use them too and I would like to see it happen.

Every few months I meet with the banks and tell them to report to me on the performance of small business financing. This morning they told me there has been an increase in the past quarter of loans to small business. Frankly I am not too impressed with the amounts, but at least it is up 2 per cent in one bank, 4 per cent in another and 9 per cent in another. There has been a slight improvement in credit availability in the last quarter. The FBDB, the bank for which I am responsible to