

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Is the hon. member just going to finish reading whatever he was reading?

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): No, Madam Speaker, my comment relates to the lack of relevancy to the small businesses bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): It will come to that one line? The hon. member.

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): The individual involved is, of course, a small business person in the community of Courtenay, British Columbia, one Mr. Lance Vrabek. He puts the question—

An hon. member: I know Lance, he's an NDPer.

An hon. member: No, he was a Conservative up until this year.

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River):—in terms of government expenditures on items such as the small business development bond are the topic of conversation in many places today. The reason that such concern is expressed is that they see how responsible the government is being with the money that is raised by small businesses and consultants such as Mr. Vrabek. He asks why the Prime Minister is continuing to expend tax dollars to pass and enforce nuisance regulations that will be challenged in the courts and cost further money.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Madam Speaker, I will not reply to the first part of the question because I do not think it has anything to do with small businesses. There will be other places and other times to discuss that. As to the money the government is spending while cutting programs for small businesses, as I said in my speech, that is precisely what is happening since this government has cut almost all programs that existed before it came into office without replacing them with new ones. So this government is cutting, and we are seeing almost the end of those programs since the only one remaining has already been reduced by 50 per cent. I hope a copy of my speech will help him inform his constituent.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Madam Speaker, I congratulate hon. members for their good and positive

speeches and suggestions. The hon. member spoke about co-operation between the various levels of government: provincial, municipal and federal. I praise him particularly for his comments on the one-stop shop. In the end, what is missing, Madam Speaker? What we could call a Small Business Protection Act, something to protect small businesses, specially in economic matters over which they have no control.

[*English*]

For example, the small business community needs protection and the proper environment to grow. It does not need hand-outs as much as it needs that kind of protection.

I want to ask the hon. member about his comments in term of the goods and services tax affecting the small business community. Can he tell the House what the introduction of the goods and services tax will mean to a small business that pays \$1,000 a month in rent for a shop? Can the hon. member also elaborate a little about the question of the interest rate and what the impact on the small business would be in light of the high interest rate at this point in time?

In conclusion, I really enjoyed his presentation.

Mr. Gagliano: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

In my experience as a parliamentarian, as a critic for small business and as an accountant before for small business, I want to make it clear that no small business wants a hand-out. That sector is proud and works very hard for the community. When one looks at community organizations, who is there to do the job, contribute and give money, goods and service? It is always the small business sector.

Members of the small business sector want programs that can help them, not by way of giving money but by direction, assistance and knowledge about what markets they can have access to or some financial protection in terms of program assisting or a matching program. Really, we have nothing to help them. I am glad in the House today that we have the new Minister of Science, Industry and Technology who is responsible even though he is a junior minister. I hope he pushes a little as a junior minister to be more active in the small business role in terms of advocacy and programs.