

Supply

This is a government that took office in 1984, talked about tax reform and then proceeded to install 32 tax increases, including this poorly designed GST, at the worst time in our economic history in terms of a downturn. The government crushed the confidence of the community at the retail level. It taxed books. It put a tax on cold pizza but not on warm pizza. It will not matter who the Conservative leader is because that GST is going to be on every doorstep morning, noon and night.

It was the same when we talked about the free trade agreement during the last debate. To this day I believe that the right hon. member for Vancouver Quadra won the free trade debate but Canadians were fooled by the foreign multinational advertising led by the Business Council on National Issues, another example of where the lobbyists came in and bought full-page ads and radio ads and fooled Canadians with third party advertising. I pray this time Canadians will not be duped again.

Today there is this big media hype about the Minister of National Defence, a person who has rarely given a speech in the House of Commons. We do not know really what she stands for, but at the same time there is this media hype around the country saying that she is the answer to all that ails us. Yet at the same time she has been part and parcel of every decision that has taken place in this House for the last five years. She was there for the GST. She is there for the helicopters.

I do not believe for a minute that Canadians are going to stand by and just say that they want another four years of Conservative rule and that they want another four years in which, according to the latest numbers from Statistics Canada, there are 2.2 million people receiving welfare and 1.5 million people on unemployment insurance. Last year we spent close to \$35 billion on welfare and unemployment insurance and the interest on those costs.

Speaking constructively about an idea that the government came up with just before Christmas, the Small Businesses Loans Act, we all know the greatest hope for new job creation lies with small business. The Small Businesses Loans Act was a good idea that the government had, but once again it has managed to screw even that up. It is unbelievable what it can do to a good idea. It thinks that Canadians are stupid. It was an idea that was

announced in December to put some cash, some capital back into the hands of small business because that is where the job creation potential is and that is where our greatest hope is.

• (1555)

Here we are pushing April and we still do not have the message out to small businesses. I have said it in this House for the last three months. I keep begging the government to communicate this idea, advertise this idea. What does it do?

It has no sense of urgency. It does not realize that the bank manager will come knocking on the door saying: "Hey, your mortgage payments are behind" or "Mr. Small Businessman, your overdraft is unacceptable. We are not going to help you any more".

The government does not understand the sense of urgency. It does not understand when people are out of work or are about to lose their homes or their jobs or their businesses, the slap in terms of personal dignity that takes place. It seems to coast along takes its time. I believe Canadians during the next election are going to remember the deep pain the government has inflicted on them.

I am not suggesting for a second that any party, any person has the magic answer or has the magic wand to correct a global recession. That is not where I am coming from. I am coming from a point that when people are in deep pain and are looking to their leaders to give them some hope, this government sort of throws up an idea but then takes its time in implementing it.

I know of small businessmen dealing with this government who have been waiting in some cases for a year and a half, up to two years, to get action on files that they requested of this government. This lack of urgency, this seeming indifference to people when they are in deep pain, is going to be this government's legacy when we go to the people over the next few months.

As I said, I do not think for a minute we have a flash answer to correct all that ails us. Throughout history even with the flaws in the Liberal Party, and I know from time to time we have incurred larger deficits and therefore caused more debt in this country's Treasury, the Liberals, if one goes back 50 years, have the greatest record for putting people back to work.