

Government Orders

I only have a few minutes left but I want to talk a little bit about this bill. Bill C-99 is good legislation. It is not perfect legislation but nothing is perfect in this place. Nothing. I will just go over again what we have to do. I want to repeat some of the things that the minister said.

If the sales of a business are \$5 million and under, there is a \$250,000 line of credit to help the business grow. The bank manager is covered by the Government of Canada for 85 per cent of the value of the loan. The minister has given an undertaking in the House today that he would welcome input in the committee on how we can have a formula or some kind of an approach to working capital. That is terrific.

• (1250)

The first problem we have is that bank managers complain about paper burden. It is too much of a drag to fill out the forms. The minister said the new paperwork is going to be easier. Respectfully, we will hold him accountable to that.

Second is the idea of communication. I see one of the government's prime communicators, one of the expert marketers is sitting in his seat. I plead with the Minister of State for Finance, and I say this constructively, we have to take some taxpayers' money and lever it with the banks' money into their advertising budgets. The minister has to explain, not just to the banks because they are supposed to know internally, but also to the customers, to the 900,000 small businesses that are out there and that are eligible for this loan.

If we did that, it would go a long way to putting some hope and some confidence back into this economy which is in desperate need of it today. I have covered most of what I wanted to say today. I want to reassure the government that my colleagues and I are committed to the small business sector in this country. We are also committed to making sure that the banks, the credit unions, the trust companies, those which are in good sound financial shape, will actively participate in this legislation because, as we all know, this is where the greatest hope of new job creation lies in this country.

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter into this debate on Bill C-99, the legislation to amend the Small Businesses Loans Act and to tell you, the minister and the government that my colleagues in the New Demo-

cratic Party are going to ensure quick passage of this legislation in this Chamber.

It is important to get this legislation into committee where it can be studied in greater detail. More important, and it is certainly something that I will be doing in my riding, is to inform the business community about the progress of this legislation and the opportunity it presents for the business community to provide some input to the government about their experiences with the banking system and in particular what advice and comments they might offer on the activity and operations of the Small Businesses Loans Program.

I am pleased to speak today, primarily on behalf of my colleague from Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, who is on his way back to Ottawa from his riding. He has spent considerable time researching the legislation and letting the government know of our interest in ensuring early passage of the bill.

I suspect that my riding is no different from many others in that one of the vital parts of the economy these days is the creation of employment. It has been proven statistically that the ideas and entrepreneurs in the small business community have created some 80 per cent of the jobs in Canada. This program, the Small Businesses Loans Program, has been a valuable tool for those businesses.

Some notes from the government have said that the interest and the awareness of the program for whatever reason has slipped a bit. I think some of the changes that we can make today on the legislation will be more encouraging. I was encouraged to hear the minister talk about some work that could be done to let more of the business community know about this particular program. He is probably right. It is probably at the bottom of some bank manager's drawer and does not get the awareness at the top of the pile.

I might make one suggestion to the minister to encourage him as some of the ministers do with bills and legislation where there is clearly a lot of support. It is a public service on our part to let our constituents know about this. His staff could prepare some material that we might use in our columns or in our householders to promote this particular program because it will of course be of benefit to the businesses in our community.