

Private Members' Business

As far as services are concerned, the value of the work done in Canada by staff located in Canada should generally represent 80 per cent of the bid value.

I come from the small business sector, and I know all about the expectations and the problems faced daily.

• (1750)

The open bidding system is the cornerstone of the government's wide-ranging reform of the contract award system.

These changes have been successful. The *Chambre de commerce de Bois-Franc* in the riding of Lotbinière, which is next door to mine, was able to make good use of the resources made available by the department to help regional businesses land government contracts worth a total of nearly \$300,000, in a little over a year's time; other examples are *Micromall Corporation* in Vancouver, *Distributed Links* in Gloucester and *Services cartographiques 2+1 Inc.* in Gatineau.

The hon. member wants us to award more contracts to Canadian small businesses. I am pleased to announce that 80 per cent of our suppliers are small businesses, and this figure does not include sub-contractors. As you know, Mr. Speaker, a contract may be awarded to a single contractor, but there will be hundreds of small businesses across this country to whom jobs will be subcontracted, which means that small businesses are still one of the federal government's major partners.

I would like to say to the hon. member from the opposition that the government works in co-operation with Canadian small businesses, that the small business sector is vital to our economy, that we have introduced some very innovative policies to help our small businesses, and that our small businesses are taking full advantage of these policies.

In concluding, I would like to say that as Canadians we must all demonstrate our strength and our determination to face the global economic challenges, and we must be more competitive. That is why we have completely revamped the Canadian government's procurement system, to maximize the competitive edge of our businesses on national and international markets.

We have one goal and that is the security and prosperity of Canadians, their children and their grandchildren.

[English]

Ms. Catherine Callbeck (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity tonight to join in the debate on this motion on small business.

First of all I want to commend the hon. member for bringing forward this motion which I think is important because it shows support for small business. It is a motion that recognizes the importance of having a healthy small business sector in this country. It is a motion that offers some support, hope and confidence to the small business sector. Certainly, that confidence and hope is really needed today.

Many of our small business operators are losing confidence in the economy. It is no wonder when you look at the number of record bankruptcies in this country, or the some 1.5 million people who are unemployed across Canada or the slow growth in the economy. It is no wonder that small business operators lack confidence in the ability of the current government to bring us through this recession.

There was a study done by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and I want to quote exactly what it had to say about confidence in the small business sector:

The causes of low confidence are rooted mainly in a continuing deep dissatisfaction with government.

Those are not my words. Those are words from a study done by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It says that the causes of the low confidence in the business community are rooted mainly in the continuing deep dissatisfaction with the government.

That survey went on to indicate certain areas where the small business community was very dissatisfied with government policies. The main concern was with tax policies. Of the small business operators who responded, 80 per cent indicated that high taxes were a significant concern to them. The government knew this but it went ahead anyway and introduced the GST. It introduced it at a time when consumer spending was really needed to generate economic growth.

What has happened since the government introduced it? Retail sales have really suffered. More and more people are going across the border to shop in the United States. In fact, the number of same-day trips to the United States by Canadians has gone up 116 per cent since 1986.