

Government Orders

government then I ask the minister whether there is any need for a program of this kind.

Let me emphasize once again that the most serious flaw in the bill is that it disenfranchises parliamentarians. It moves the authority to make decisions and obligations on behalf of the people of Canada from the House to the cabinet. That is wrong. Democracy must never be denied.

I reiterate that unless that provision is removed from the bill we will oppose it.

• (1630)

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.):
Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-99, an act to amend the Small Business Loans Act and to share with the House the concerns and hopes of small business owners and managers throughout Guelph—Wellington.

At this important time in Canadian history I remind all Canadians that it is the hope of small business people in Guelph—Wellington, their families and their employees that Canada remains united. They recognize the imperfections of our confederation, but they realize, as we have in the past, that we can continue to evolve to make our country always stronger. They are confident that a united Canada, one that includes Quebec as an active member of our nation, will continue to be regarded worldwide as the best country in the world in which to live.

Bill C-99 is part of our ongoing effort to reduce the deficit, fulfil the promises we made to Canadians two years ago and provide the support that is necessary to enable small business to grow and to create jobs. I congratulate the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Finance who have directed and focused our efforts to strengthen small business in Canada. The Minister of Industry visited my community last year. He was welcomed by small business people who encouraged him to continue his initiative of providing support and assistance to them, so that they can continue to build a strong community in Guelph—Wellington and elsewhere.

Small business people in Guelph—Wellington, when talking to me, remind me that they have hope in our future. They talk to me as women and men who have taken risks in order to build a life for themselves and their families. They are creating jobs in my community and in every riding across Canada. They look to us, the federal government, to assist them in that important responsibility.

The Small Business Loan Act is part of our efforts. Since 1961 more than 420,000 loans, totalling over \$15.5 billion, have been made to small businesses. These loans have helped small

business gain access to capital for start-up, expansion and growth. The program's success lies in its ability to serve as an economic development tool and as an example of public sector and private sector co-operation.

Guelph—Wellington recently hosted, through the efforts of small business leaders like Catherine Billings, Anne Redfearn-Grobbo, Richard Zinck and Valerie Poulton, Community Spirit '95, a small business expo, which brought together business people to exchange ideas, share expertise and celebrate the successes of small businesses in Wellington county. The message that I received at Community Spirit '95 and wherever I meet small business leaders is: We need government to get out of the way where it causes us unnecessary burden; to listen to us when we have ideas for our future and to provide the assistance necessary for us to weather uncertainty and to expand our resources when we want to create jobs and strengthen our achievements. The Small Business Loans Act program allows every small business in Guelph—Wellington whose revenues do not exceed \$5 million annually to ask for that assistance.

Small business people in my community understand the seriousness of our financial crisis. They know that deficit spending is not the way to sustain our economic future. They are concerned about taxation and they want the government to manage its money as well and as carefully as they manage their own money. They recognize the need to reduce expenditures and to refocus spending.

The Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal visited Guelph this fall where he spoke to representatives of small business about the program review that will redesign government. They welcomed the change because they support our efforts to spend what we have and not to mortgage our future.

Recently, the Small Business Loans Act program has suffered tremendous losses for the government. Assuming continuation of the historic losses that have occurred over the past few years, the annual program cost would increase by over \$100 million. Clearly this is a threat to the future of the program. The potential cost of the program given these circumstances, and the government's need for deficit control required that the program be brought to full cost recovery.

• (1635)

The federal government included an examination of the Small Business Loans Act in its program review process. During the months of October and November 1994 the review included extensive consultations with major stakeholders, representing lenders and those who borrow. As part of our efforts to encourage more participation by members of Parliament, the recommendations of the industry committee and the small business