

Government Orders

The annual report of the Canada Student Loans Program tabled in the House of Commons indicated that there are 215,000 students who rely on the Canada Student Loans Program to help them gain access to post-secondary education.

The Canadian Federation of Students says contempt for the democratic process has become the trademark of the Conservative government. Tory MPs sitting in the House of Commons committee studying Bill C-76 first denied witnesses the right to appear in front of the committee and then proceeded to adopt the bill in less than five minutes.

Members of the Canadian Federation of Students had hoped to appear before the committee to discuss one of the bill's harshest measures, the elimination of a six-month post-graduation interest subsidy on student loans as well as the lobbyists' registration fee, but they were not allowed to appear. I think that is absolutely disgraceful.

With regard to the Small Businesses Loans Act, as mentioned at the outset, the budget proposes the broadening of the scope of the Small Businesses Loans Act by increasing the maximum individual loan amount from \$100,000 to \$200,000.

This amendment to the SBLA has a limited impact to assist small business because it is not logical to change one parameter without looking at changes to other parameters. It is hard to cover costs under the SBLA. There is a deterrent of its use because it only provides for floating rate loans and not fixed rates as most business customers would prefer. There is a need for more promotion of the SBLA. This should probably be promoted by the banks and not the federal government.

An interesting thing happened to me just recently. I have been promoting this increase from \$100,000 to \$200,000 to small business people within the community of Nepean and suggesting that they contact their banks. The banks do not like it. Why do the banks not like it? It is because if there is any chance of the person not coming through or not being able to carry through on the loan, the bank has to pick up the loss, not the federal government.

Another interesting thing is that the federal government never consulted with the financial institutions to

determine whether or not this was a good measure. It never talked with the banks on that. I think that is disgraceful.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is always being mentioned as if it were the be-all and end-all for advice that is given to the federal government. The chamber does not like the small business financial proposal either. What do you say to that? It says that although the federal government recently raised the eligible loan amount under the Small Businesses Loans Act from \$100,000 to \$200,000 it wants the ceiling raised to \$300,000. It believes that \$200,000 is not enough. Increasing to \$300,000 would attract more financial institutions to lend under the act.

In addition, the chamber strongly urges the federal government to review all of the eligibility criteria and the program terms. It recognizes that the program has some usefulness and urges a review of its structure. That is from the national Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

Under the amendments to the Lobbyists Registration Act these amendments say: "Give the Governor in Council regulation-making power to enact regulations, charging a fee to be paid by lobbyists".

In other words, if lobbyists want to get something from me, they have to pay me a fee. I was always of the impression that when I am elected to this prestigious Parliament, anybody has the right to approach me and ask me anything they wish.

They can do this without me or the Government of Canada charging them a fee. I think that is ridiculous. The introduction of fees represents a radical departure never contemplated by Parliament or the government itself.

The other aspect of the bill relates to the reduction of salaries of cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister. I agree with that one.

It is unfortunate they did not go one step further and start looking at members' pensions. They should start realizing that maybe they should be paid at age 55 or 60 like the rest of Canadians.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak to the Draconian measures the government is trying to implement in this House of Commons.