

Private Members' Business

To the hon. member who raised this motion, I agree that it is the most important issue facing this House of Commons today. I wish we could have this debate going non-stop around the clock until we grind this issue down and get a number of concrete and doable ideas on the table. I, like the hon. member, believe that this is the priority for all of us.

We on this side of the House are trying to work in some concrete ways in addressing this problem. I think it is important for Canadians to understand that, because it is easy to create the perception in the public's eye that not a heck of a lot happens in Ottawa and in this House of Commons.

We stated during the last election that the greatest hope for putting Canadians back to work rests with the small and medium sized business community. Not only on this side but all members have been working very hard in the industry committee on a study called access to capital for small business which essentially will challenge the banks to become more accountable in their actions toward small business.

That report hopefully will be tabled in this House in the not too distant future for all of us to debate. Members from all parties worked on that report, not just for the last six months but during the summer. It is in its final edit stages. Canadians should know that commitment of challenging the banks, that report which we said in the last budget we would undertake, is very close to becoming a public document for all of us to debate. I think that is important.

I would also like to remind Canadians that my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka worked all last spring with many other colleagues and they travelled every region of Ontario on an access to capital report. That report is in fact finished. It contains some fabulous recommendations. It is available to all Canadians. They just have to write to the office of the member for Muskoka—Parry Sound who has said repeatedly that he would be more than happy to send it out.

• (1145)

In specific terms, small business needs capital if it is going to put people back to work. That is something concrete that we are working on.

There is something else happening. I do not want for a second to suggest to the member for Yukon that what I am saying is enough. I do not think we are doing enough. I think we should be more accountable. It is important to show that we are doing some specific things.

There is another thing we are working on in a very specific way. There is a joint Industry Canada—Finance Canada study on how to reduce the paper burden for small business. This is another reason why a lot of entrepreneurs have a feeling of frustration and are holding back. That study, which is being worked on, is something we must address in concrete terms.

Another issue that Canadians want us to take on this fall especially as we head toward the next budget is the whole issue of tax reform. We have a system of taxation in this country that is inefficient, complex, and obviously not fair. I support many of the recommendations of the member for Yukon. She has talked about many of these issues over the last number of years. I believe that we have now reached a point in this House and in the country where Canadians are going to be pressing us harder than ever to deal with the whole issue of taxation.

I believe taxation is an integral part of putting Canadians back to work. The harder you work, the more you make and the more you tend to want to invest or spend. The current tax system is a disincentive to investment and a disincentive to spending. In fact many of our best and brightest, our real achievers, are leaving our country. If they are not parking themselves offshore, they are parking their investment dollars offshore. Putting Canadians back to work and dealing with the very concrete and real numbers that the member for Yukon talked about in terms of deficit and debt costs cannot be done without dealing with the entire tax regime that exists in this country. That will be another one of our very important challenges.

Mr. Riis: Let's get going on it.

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Members are saying let's get going. It is the first day back from the summer recess and we are going. We have a tremendous turnout of interested members this morning. It is Monday morning and we are going at it. I am not asking you to be patient. In fact, I hope you keep pressing harder than ever. I think members are raising a very important point. This is the sense of urgency.

I was working on a project this summer in the Toronto waterfront corridor. According to provincial studies—

Mr. Riis: A casino.

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Yes, a casino was included as one factor in the equation. It was only 2 per cent of it. Last week some municipal politicians were saying that we are too aggressive in our actions in trying to get this project going. I do not know how you can be too aggressive in trying to put people to work, especially when you come from a city where there are close to 400,000 out of work.

That deals with my final point. We as members of Parliament have to understand the sense of urgency that Canadians feel. It is something that we really must address.

• (1150)

I know that in the private sector when times are tough you work two shifts a day. Sometimes you work six or seven days a week. Not only in this government but at all levels of government we should possibly consider setting up a public service