

Private Members' Business

medium-sized businesses wanted a chance to compete for federal government contracts and thus to be able to develop new expertise or new products and to take on new international markets.

Our business people know that they must face national and international competition to survive and that is why they are not trying to be protected from this competition but to meet it.

Every year, the department organizes a number of working seminars across the country, to keep the business community informed of our initiatives and receive its invaluable comments.

The minister's determination to update his department's policies, together with the needs expressed by our small business community, were signs that a genuine revolution in the contract distribution system was about to occur. It did.

In April 1990, an official announcement ushered in open bidding and the procurement opportunities board which enables potential suppliers to examine requirements for tender documents. This is the folder we were talking about. That is how we promote these new policies.

It is no longer necessary to be registered on our supplier list for contracts over \$25,000, and every supplier has direct access to our procurement requirements on a daily basis. Incidentally, as of June 1, 1992, our procurement opportunities board will offer a new range of services, including a supplier matching index, access to other data bases and electronic dissemination of tender documents.

For the past two years we have had a procurement system that is accessible, fair and effective. In fact, Canadian small businesses have applauded the efforts of the Department of Supply and Services to create a system in which suppliers select the contracts on which they wish to bid.

Under the new system suppliers can bring grievances before the procurement review board, and I would like to point out that this is a first in Canada. The procurement review board was created by the free trade agreement, and we decided to extend its mandate to cover procurement by Supply and Services.

At last, we have a procurement system that helps small businesses be more aware of both business opportunities

for subcontracting as well as opportunities for bidding on contracts.

If the hon. member opposite had taken the trouble to find out about the department's current policies, he would have moved a motion to congratulate the Minister of Supply and Services or at least could have suggested new ways to help improve these policies.

The hon. member may be tempted to stress the fact that some contracts are awarded on a sole-source basis. That is quite understandable, provided one ignores such elementary considerations as production rights, national security, sole source of expertise and the government's financial resources.

We want to offer our contracts to all Canadian suppliers, and that is why they are announced in advance on the Procurement Opportunities Board, to attract new supplies.

We regularly challenge Canadian entrepreneurs to prove they are able to supply the goods and services required. This new approach helps us discover new suppliers in Canada and obtain the best price for the Canadian taxpayer.

I think it would be hard to imagine a better procurement system. We are constantly in touch with the chambers of commerce, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, provincial governments and, of course, with thousands of suppliers.

They know our policies are on the right track, and I am sure they could give the hon. member plenty of information on the subject if he cared to call them. In fact, I suggest he discuss this with the businesses in his own riding.

Determined to make further improvements, Supply and Services Canada has started streamlining other policies, including the policy on Canadian content, a potential source of confusion and difficult to implement. We now have only one policy which is entirely straightforward. As we must, and subject to our international obligations, we always stress buy Canada whenever bids are sufficiently competitive.

To take advantage of this preference, suppliers must be able to certify that the goods they offer are entirely produced in Canada or that the end product meets the rules of origin criteria.