

Private Members' Business

and safe working environment and support education and training. These objectives are cited in the government's own Main Estimates for this year.

The concern of many is that these objectives are being compromised by the government's decision to eliminate funding to the centre and to have the centre become self-sufficient.

The centre's mandate is now a commercial one. This is confirmed in the centre's business plan which covers the five-year period from April, 1990 to April, 1995. The plan was developed to respond to the decision of the Minister of Labour that the government will substantially reduce and ultimately discontinue its funding of the centre.

This plan calls for price increases on most existing products and services. It is the centre's plan for financial self-sufficiency.

The key service provided by the centre is a free access service for workers and other individuals. This, apparently, for the moment, will not be subject to a user fee. But what guarantees are there that this will not happen at some point in the future?

One of the strategies outlined in the business plan clearly states that the sale of products rather than the delivery of services will be favoured because the profit potential is greater. The great concern is that profits will be displacing the ability and right of workers and small employers to important information.

The centre's new commercial mandate affects the centre's credibility. Contributors which provide information free of charge to the centre for dissemination are concerned that user fees are going to be applied.

The application of user fees violates universal access to health and safety information. These fees are regressive. People who can afford to pay for the information will get it. Those who cannot afford to pay will not get access to vital information.

Surely safe and healthy workplaces are fundamental rights of Canadian workers. The government should be protecting this right, not diminishing it.

The great danger is that vital and necessary information becomes privileged and access also becomes privileged.

The move by the government endangers the future of the centre. It is wrong. I urge the government to

reinstate its funding to the centre, as recommended in the motion of my hon. colleague from Hamilton West. Let us not punish success by withdrawing support.

[Translation]

Mr. Charles DeBlois (Montmorency—Orléans): Madam Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak to the motion presented by the hon. member for Hamilton West, which asks the government to reconsider its decision on cutbacks at the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

My constituents may find it somewhat surprising to see me addressing this subject, Madam Speaker.

Nevertheless, I think it is important for those watching us, as it is for my constituents, to realize that our role here in Ottawa is not only to defend the interests of our constituency but to take an interest in all national issues. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety is certainly one of the most important Canadian institutions that is engaged in promoting and providing the kind of information that is so vital to the labour world.

This is our fourth day of debate on this motion. I think we should recall that the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety was established some 12 years ago, and that every year, as the previous speaker mentioned, this organization has received, mostly from the federal government, the sum of \$10 million to meet its objectives and inform Canadians. Recently, however, in accordance with our policy to put our financial house in order, the government of which I am a member decided to ask all Crown corporations to do their share, so that the clean-up of our public finance strategy will be shared by all agencies receiving funding from the Crown. That is why, I repeat, this government has, I would say almost reluctantly, asked the centre to do what all other agencies are doing to help put our financial house in order.

This morning, Madam Speaker, I was reading *Hansard* for the three days we debated this issue. I read all this with great interest, but I must admit that before this morning, I was not familiar with the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, and I must say the range of the centre's activities was a revelation. Thanks to the speeches by previous speakers, including members of the opposition, I was able to acquire a good understanding of the indispensable role played by this national institution. Our opposition friends all agree that we