

Government Orders

ment Bank, or through a private financial institution, up to \$20 million.

Government has the ability to use some creative tools in the way it finances and uses some of our programs. It is the same with the Small Business Loans Act that we are talking about in Bill C-99. It can work in conjunction with other credit facilities provided by private lenders. The term credit can be covered by the Small Business Loans Act and the bank or the private institution can come along and be happy to provide an operating credit. In a lot of cases we work in conjunction with various programs.

• (1710)

Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka for his efforts on the bill. As part of the industry committee and as part of various task forces, he has travelled widely in Canada to receive information from small businesses.

Actual consultation with small businesses is an area that has been overlooked in the past. They do not have a large staff or a lot of money to spend carelessly. Every penny they spend in their budgets is very important to them.

My question for the member concerns communication and information to small businesses once the bill is passed. It is very important that the consulting process and improvements continue to go forward. Getting the information out to the many small businesses around the country is very important. The member might want to comment on that.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question because it makes an excellent point. Not only is it important to have the programming, it is also important that the small business sector knows the programming exists and how to use it.

One initiative of the government and the Minister of Industry is the single window approach to providing information so that instead of having to go to maybe five or six different offices to gather all the information, small business people can go to one location to talk to an individual and learn the various programming aspects they need to know to help their small businesses. There are many vehicles for doing that. It can be done through chambers of commerce. Most communities have a chamber of commerce. It can also be done through economic development offices.

The idea of a single window approach to provide information to the small businessmen and women is one that we recognize as a government to be important and are working on to ensure it takes place.

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure for me to participate in the work of the Standing Committee on Industry. With a businesslike attitude committee members have gone about their work for the benefit of all Canadian small businesses and of assisting them in competing in the world economy of today.

I was particularly appreciative of the comments of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry regarding his concern for the amount of red tape, the paperwork and the difficulties with taxes faced by small businesses. It is with this kind of attitude we approach many of the difficulties our business people are facing with a view to assisting them to make our Canadian economy as competitive, as viable and as profitable as any in the world.

Small business is the cornerstone of the Canadian economy today. Using a definition of small business being a concern with less than 100 employees, there are about a million small businesses registered in the country. This means that small business makes up nearly 99 per cent of all business enterprises in Canada. Small business accounts for about 60 per cent of the economy's private sector output. These are substantial figures.

As well, small business entrepreneurs presently create eight out of ten new jobs. In a day when we depend on new ideas being translated into new jobs, and new products and new services being translated into a larger market share of our highly competitive business world, we do not need to argue the value of small business to the Canadian economy. Rather we need to learn how to encourage entrepreneurs to develop new ideas and new products.

• (1715)

As a nation Canada has historically been highly creative. We have learned how necessary it is to adapt to both the economic and physical environments. However, we have been less successful in taking our ideas and inventions from the laboratories and basements of entrepreneurs and getting them into the national and international marketplace.

It was extremely educational for me before I was even on the committee to attend some of the hearings and listen to the difficulties small business people were having in securing loans, securing the capital they needed to get their ideas and concerns off the ground. In some instances there were business people with many orders in their order books, ready to sell but with no money to work to produce the product. One very significant reason for this lack of success has been the shortage of loan capital, of equity capital, available to someone to take a well developed idea or an advanced product prototype and make it a commercially viable asset of the Canadian economy.

So often we have heard stories of how someone had this great invention but after years of struggle to get it marketed they