

● (1500)

Small and medium size businesses in the country are obviously very encouraged by the strong growth we enjoyed in the month of August, but it is also important to look at the details behind that growth.

The fact is that half the increase came in manufacturing. In fact manufacturing is up 8.7 per cent over the month of August last year. At the same time construction is up 7.7 per cent over a year ago. There is a clear revival as a result of the increase in the number of jobs and consumer confidence; retail sales are up.

One thing I am delighted to be able to say—and I congratulate the member for his question—is that we are clearly on the way to the strongest growth in the country since 1988.

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PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of our fellow parliamentarians who are here with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association: Mrs. Elizabeth Hubley of Prince Edward Island; the hon. Gérald Clavette of Newfoundland; the hon. Emery Barnes, Speaker of British Columbia; Anthony Whitford, MLA, Northwest Territories; Neil Reimer, Assistant Committee Clerk, B.C.; and Peter Doucette, Government Whip, P.E.I.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-57, an act to implement the agreement establishing the World Trade Organization, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as a Quebecer and as the member of the Bloc Québécois representing the riding of Longueuil, I am pleased to take part in this debate on the bill to implement the World Trade Organization Agreement. In my remarks, I will rely on my personal experience.

I worked in the business sector for 15 years. I owned a small business that employed about 25 people. I was also the president of a company in the wholesale business with some 30 employees and president of the Chamber of Commerce of the South Shore of Montreal, the third most important chamber of commerce in Quebec. During the same period, I sat as director on the board of a credit union. I say all that just to show that most business people in Quebec are deeply involved in their community, just as I was, and can be pressed for time.

Government Orders

It is sometimes difficult for them to deal with international matters. I am proud of my deep involvement in the business sector, because it is a marvellous and exciting sector. Business people are constantly looking for means to improve both management and productivity. It is a world of constant change and inventiveness.

As a businessman and a politician from Quebec, I am delighted at the new opportunities that will flow from the new GATT.

● (1505)

Business people, through trade, will also get to know each other better and probably become the best instrument for achieving a more lasting peace in the world. So the Uruguay Round and Bill C-57 are important steps, as I have just mentioned. Today, the globalization of markets creates important and increasing opportunities. Businesses have to be more and more efficient.

Businesses need a flexible and efficient framework regulating trade as well as credible dispute-settlement mechanisms. Businesses must be able to count on the co-operation of enlightened government partners as well as unions sensitive to the economy. Businesses need laws and rules adapted to this new environment.

The Uruguay Round negotiations will lead to an increase in international trade. Some statistics put the increase at \$750 billion over the next 10 years. The amount of money flowing from one country to another is potentially enormous on the international level. So we must carefully watch this increase in international trade. This will also bring about an increase in total wealth of some \$200 billion.

Here also, people will be richer, they will be able to spend more and they will have a greater potential for doing so. With Bill C-57, which implements the accord in Canada and Quebec, what are the stakes for Quebec, what is the importance of trade for Quebec? Quebec has a long commercial tradition. The history of our people is marked by trade.

Fur, fish and softwood trade has been the backbone of our economic development for the last four centuries. Today, we still export softwood, newspaper, electricity, aluminum and communication services. The last thirty years have allowed Quebec to open to the world.

The increase of international trade in Quebec is important and, of course, we have established some bases in other countries. We have several offices in several major cities of the world, in the United States as well as in Europe. Even in Japan, we have trade commissioners, so that Quebec is remarkably open to the world, and we will continue to work in that direction.

Quebec is very open to the world. Here is an example that happened not too long ago. In 1988 the government had a free trade project with the United States. Quebec was one of the first to support free trade. Free trade was supported almost unani-