

Private Members' Business

As of April 1 of this year we are down to one directive, except in two small sectors: one in the computer sector where they have asked for a year extension while we do another little study to make sure that we are not making it more advantageous for foreign companies over Canadian companies, we are doing an extra study there, and the second exemption happens to be in shipbuilding.

By and large, we have tried to make it much simpler for Canadians so that they will be able to understand what our policy is. The policy is based on the rules of origin, the same rules of origin that are used in international trade, which we have in the free trade agreement and are under discussion at the GATT.

I want to tell the hon. member that I am very pleased at this opportunity today. And in the other two hours that will be allocated, I believe, to this motion, we will be able to go a long way toward discussing and dispelling any myths there might be that Canadian small business is not important and also let Canadians know how they can sell to the Government of Canada, because we certainly do want to have more and more companies in Canada bidding on our opportunities.

I do want to say that, yes, the Americans do have their buy America, they have their small business set aside. That is why the level on the FTA is at \$25,000 U.S. or \$29,000 Canadian. That is why we end up having, in reverse, the same protection. It is not that it is going to the United States and we do not have it explicitly, but the fact is that we end up buying in Canada. If we wanted to I guess we could go to France, but we usually try and buy it right here in this country.

I want to say to the Americans that the advice we have had on this is to not ever put something like that in, because it becomes an extremely expensive procedure with so many appeal provisions and so on in there that it delays the process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order please. The hon. minister has 30 seconds to wind up.

Mr. Dick: I want to thank the hon. member for bringing this up. I wish I could go on. There will be other speakers on our side in the next three hours of this debate who will be able to explain all the opportunities.

It is a great thing to talk about small business in this country.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I too salute the member for bringing forward this motion. I would like to continue where the Minister of Supply and Services left off. He happens to be in charge of one of the most efficient and most supportive departments in all of government as it pertains to small and medium-size businesses.

I have watched this organization for a number of years. When I arrived in this city in 1980, if a business wanted to do business with the Government of Canada, most of the action happened here in Ottawa. Now the department has been structured so that the Department of Supply and Services has a certain percentage of allocation in western Canada and in Atlantic Canada. It is a fantastic thing. There is no excuse for any small and medium-size business in this country not having access and doing business with the Government of Canada.

What most small businesses do not realize is the opportunity that exists with the Government of Canada. Quite often they do not even have to be part of a bid process. Sometimes, if you have a creative idea or if you have a product or a service that is innovative, you can put it to the Department of Supply and Services in the form of an unsolicited proposal.

You do not always get it but I know of many small and medium-size businesses that have been fortunate enough to come up with innovative ideas that the Government of Canada has purchased without even going through the bid process. I am sure that it measured the percentage of profit that the business got in order to make sure that taxpayers' money was not being abused, but the point is that there is a great opportunity in the Department of Supply and Services for all types of products.

For example, in my own riding there is a company called Woods. It manufactures sleeping bags and tents for the Department of National Defence. Think of the number of shirts the Government of Canada buys for the Mounties. Think of the amount of food the Government of Canada buys for the federal penitentiaries and all the related products and services.