

Small Businesses Loans Act

preneurs? By doing that, we can significantly reduce interest rates and create jobs. Can we expect that kind of support from his Party? Is his desire to lower interest rates really genuine?

● (1620)

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, we say those are our intentions. We are the only political Party for many years which has said that we should direct the Governor of the Bank of Canada to start enacting a made-in-Canada interest rate policy and start moving interest rates down. We are the only political Party which has said that that ought to be the case. But what we do not support is the Governor of the Bank of Canada, today and every other day, going out and spending millions, nay, hundreds of millions of dollars in some weeks to buy our own currency to keep interest rates up. That we consider to be folly.

I respect the Hon. Member's question and I understand the point he is making, but I want to say to him that we in the NDP do not feel it is necessary to go to Japan, Europe, the United States or Southeast Asia to find capital and creativity and entrepreneurship to develop the Canadian economy. We are convinced it can be done right here in Canada. We are convinced that we have enough capital to start. We have the creativity, energy, talents and resources right here in this country. What we lack is the will. As long as Members opposite can send out a signal to Canadians that they do not have enough faith in Canadians so that we have to bring in foreign citizens to solve these economic problems, Canadians are going to be reluctant to take this Government into their confidence.

Interest rates at present levels are an incentive for Canadians and others to save. When you have a choice to invest in a secure term deposit and obtain 12 per cent to 15 per cent return with no effort, no work, no worry and no risk, or take the same money and put it into a business venture in Canada today, what would you do as a sensible investor, Mr. Speaker? With interest rates as high as they are, savings are encouraged and the entrepreneurial spirit, willingness and ability of people to invest is discouraged. So we say, let us have confidence in Canada. The best way to do that is to stop looking outside Canada for answers and take steps to mobilize the capital we have in our country.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now over. The Hon. Member for Guelph (Mr. Winegard).

Mr. William C. Winegard (Guelph): Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak about small businesses in relation with Bill C-23.

[English]

However, before beginning my introductory remarks, may I make some comments on the speech this morning made by the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria). I enjoyed the slap and dash and flash of that speech. It reminded me a little bit of the hockey game last night: lots of fire and flash, but unfortunately they kept losing sight of the goal.

Ms. Copps: But who has the trophy?

Mr. Winegard: Since I have now heard, as usual, from the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps), may I say on this particular subject, Mr. Speaker, that I hope she will immediately move into a small business enterprise because her salary from this Chamber will certainly not pay the hospital bills to which I intend to subject her for falling on my shoulder last night.

This area of our economy, namely small business, is one that former Liberal Governments have never really understood. It is an area, as we heard earlier today, which has been hampered by red tape, excessive government interference and a tax system that even the Ministry of National Revenue did not understand. The current Government is taking and will continue to take all the steps necessary to ensure that small business is able to generate the jobs so badly needed in this country. This Government understands that private enterprise creates wealth and jobs, not the Government. When small business flourishes, Canada flourishes. What this country needs is more small business people making more money through their own endeavours and enjoying the fruits of their labour as they bring Canada back to prosperity.

Things have changed in the last 30 or 40 years. There was a time when people did not need so much government help in starting a business. I would like to relate my personal experiences in small business and how things have changed. Immediately after World War II, my father, my brother and I began a small business, which still continues. When we opened that business in 1945, we had some veterans' allowances to contribute, but the most important thing is that we opened with 500 gallons of gasoline—the oil companies were prepared to give you credit in those days—one tire, I think one patching kit and three orange crates for chairs. Now you know and I know, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot start a business like that today. It costs you hundreds of thousands of dollars to move into such an automobile business because you need to have a large stock of parts, the best equipment and so on. It is very difficult for someone in the early stages of setting up a business to accumulate that kind of capital. Indeed, it is difficult for someone to go to the bank without any collateral and seek that kind of money. They must have an ironclad opportunity.

Bill C-23, this Act to amend the Small Businesses Loans Act, as the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mr. Stevens) said just the other day, demonstrates the federal Government's recognition that small business is the engine of growth and that the changes we propose, following consultation on the future of the Small Businesses Loans Act with business, are the first results of that continuing process of consultation aimed at strengthening the small business sector and, as I said earlier, thus strengthening the Canadian economy.

Who is eligible? When I think of small business, I think immediately of the service industries, the retail industry, small manufacturing. Of course, they are the ones that are eligible.