

Small Businesses Loans Act

Today, this Conservative Government is asking us to approve, very quickly as usual, a Bill calling for the merging under the Small Businesses Loans Act of the legislation which used to make it possible for fishermen to obtain loans to improve their equipment and operation.

If we compare both legislations, the old one which is expiring today and the new one which will come into force tomorrow, the \$30 million global ceiling will be replaced by a \$2.5 billion global ceiling.

But the difference is not that overall ceiling, concerning which the Government even at that point, in 1985, stated: Come now, we are increasing that big ceiling. What does that give us, a higher overall ceiling, when in fact all the other requirements do not allow Canadians to use the benefits in that act, which means less use? And we see immediately that under the previous act, one could have loans up to a maximum of \$150,000, but that has now been reduced to \$100,000.

We see for instance that the term to repay, which was 15 years, is now reduced to 10 years. And there is, of course, as I said, that famous 85 per cent guarantee, which used to be 100 per cent. Not to mention, of course, as previous speakers emphasized, the 1 per cent that must be paid up front to get those loans. But that is subject, Madam Speaker, to small business loans to the fishing sector declining sharply, more so than in the so-called SMB sectors.

This is why we oppose the legislation, Madam Speaker, and will introduce amendments to correct those gaps. I hope the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Tourism—and this is one of his first opportunities as Minister of State for Small Businesses and Tourism to take part in the discussion of a Bill he is directly responsible for—will support our amendments, which of course would give us an act that at least will meet in part the needs of Canadians.

I would like to take this opportunity to state that on this side of the House, in the final report our task force on small businesses released this month, we are still expecting the Government report, the report of the task force that was established in 1985.

We are still waiting for the official report, although we were able to obtain a photocopy of this report which was printed in 1986 and which the Government is still refusing to make public.

I should like to say that in this report, it is clearly indicated that the Small Businesses Loans Act was to be amended to provide for a \$150,000 ceiling instead of the \$100,000 ceiling.

Therefore, in regions such as the Maritimes and British Columbia, as well as such distant Quebec regions as the Gaspé, the guarantee will amount to 100 per cent instead of 85 per cent. It is possible that in urban areas it will be easier, in view of the greater number of financial institutions.

In this report, therefore, we have established . . . we suggest the principle of having a guarantee ranging from 85 per cent up to 100 per cent, based on the regions and the needs.

I ask the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Tourism, both during this debate and his study in committee, to consider this proposal and amend this Bill to make it more practical for its users.

For the time being, I conclude my remarks on this, but I will certainly have the opportunity to make others both in committee and at the third reading stage.

Mr. Alex Kindy (Calgary East): Madam Speaker, I want to praise the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Tourism (Mr. Valcourt) for his initiative and his dedication to small businesses.

The fact remains that small businesses are the foundation of our industry. The larger corporations are not there to help us.

What surprises me, for instance, is that recently . . .

• (1540)

[English]

I would say what astonished me lately is that the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) had supported Bill C-259—

Mr. Riis: Point of order.

Mr. Kindy: —and it was a big corporation he was supporting.

Mr. Riis: I simply want to encourage you, Madam Speaker, to encourage Hon. Members to stick to the topic being discussed. We are debating the extension of the Small Businesses Loans Act. The Hon. Member for Calgary East (Mr. Kindy) is going back to a decision the Speaker made a few moments ago. He has to learn the rules of Parliament. I would advise him to sit down and open up the Standing Orders and read them. I suspect he is capable of that. I would urge him, if he is going to be a parliamentarian, at least to learn the rules of Parliament.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I am sure the Hon. Member for Calgary East (Mr. Kindy) is just about ready to join the two propositions together.

[Translation]

Mr. Kindy: Madam Speaker, I am surprised that when referring to small businesses which are the backbone of our society, because they create more jobs—that is why I am in empathy with them—and I think the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Tourism is doing an excellent job—but I cannot help mentioning larger corporations which are certainly important but which do not create quite as many jobs as small businesses do.

That is why I referred to the Monsanto Company of St. Louis, Missouri, which, I think, is an international company