

Supply

provincial boards, still have to obtain proper authorization from their jurisdictional authorities before entering into any agreement with the bank.

In circumstances and situations in which a jurisdictional body must grant authorization for a partner to enter an agreement there will be no change.

[Translation]

Why is this change necessary? Because the wording of the previous legislation limited the bank's ability to conclude agreements with non commercial firms. In some cases, these organizations, some of which come under provincial jurisdiction, proposed to the bank itself that it help provide financial and management services.

The bank could not do anything at the time, because it lacked the legislative authority to enable it to co-operate. A lot of time and effort went into obtaining this authority. Clause 20 will eliminate all the bureaucratic red tape and will make it possible to provide more effective services, which small business can use.

[English]

Clause 20 of Bill C-91 is very technical I will admit, but it allows the bank to enter into joint co-operative agreements. Clause 20 will allow partnerships, joint ventures and even the delivery of financial assistance on behalf of other agencies subject to the banks usual guidelines.

• (1625)

As an example of co-operation and collaboration, the Federal Business Development Bank and FORD-Q, the body responsible for regional development in Quebec, are currently developing a strategic partnership as part of a pilot project. The object is to create a special fund which will have a leverage effect in order to support projects undertaken by small and medium size enterprises in unexploited niches.

In addition, the bank has developed strategic partnerships with agencies and departments of Quebec's provincial government. For example, the bank recently completed an agreement to develop a technology training and counselling program with le Ministère de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de la Technologie du Québec and the Professional Engineers Association of Quebec.

[Translation]

The bank, moreover, joined with the Société québécoise de la main-d'oeuvre to start up a program to promote and encourage women's initiatives in conjunction with a Bank of Montreal program to train and develop business women.

Together with the Maison régionale de l'industrie in Sherbrooke, the Federal Regional Development Office designed a program to advise and train new exporters. The power to

establish partnerships is no different from similar provisions in legislation governing other crown corporations, including the Farm Credit Corporation and the Export Development Corporation.

[English]

I must point out at this point that the ability to enter into partnerships certainly follows one of the recommendations of "Taking Care of Business", the report which the Standing Committee on Industry released in October 1994. I had the pleasure to sit on that committee. The committee recommended that the mandate of the bank be confirmed and refocused as a complementary lender to small and medium size businesses and that it be authorized to use new financial instruments to fulfil its mandate. The two members of the Bloc Québécois who sit on that committee were in full agreement with that recommendation.

Bill C-91 is an important element in creating the supportive environment for small and medium size enterprises across Canada which will contribute to building a long and lasting prosperity. This bill is one part of the future we are building for small businesses and for Canada's economic prosperity.

There is no doubt about the importance of small and medium size businesses to our economy today and tomorrow. Small businesses employ more than half of the Canadians working in the private sector. Since the early 1980s small businesses have created over 87 per cent of all new jobs in Canada.

[Translation]

Small and medium size businesses will continue to be a source of jobs and wealth in Canada. Our goal is to create a climate in which businesses will be able to continue to create jobs for Canadians, and to contribute to the wealth of the country.

We are taking action on this basis, and moving toward our goal. In 1994, we asked several groups and organizations in the public and private sectors, including the committee, how the government could create a suitable climate to foster the growth of small businesses.

Everybody agreed that small and medium size businesses have great potential to create even more jobs and wealth. Unfortunately, that potential is too often left untapped. The groups and organizations we consulted said that, in order to tap this potential, the government had to start with reducing the deficit. The first step was taken by the finance minister in his last budget.

Moreover, they told us that we must develop more efficient, more effective, and more relevant programs for small businesses. Finally, we must recognize that the government cannot, on its own, foster, in the small business community, the vitality and the growth the country needs.