

Federal Business Development Bank Act

Mr. Speaker, I should like to deal with another important activity of the bank, namely, management services for small business. To that end, I shall start with the conclusions of the study on the financial problems of small businesses, which was made before the Federal Business Development Bank was set up, and which revealed that one of the big problems of small businessmen is that of management aptitudes or talents. To meet that need the responsibilities of the Federal Business Development Bank were expanded in order to offer small business management services in addition to financial services.

So those management services include consultation, training and information services. Some of them were started by the Industrial Development Bank itself within the framework of its normal activities in the small business area which expanded following actions taken on an ad hoc rather than a planned basis. However, with the establishment of the Federal Business Development Bank, those activities became a statutory responsibility of the bank, and they were considerably expanded later. Consultation services are offered through CASE the Counselling Assistance to Small Enterprises program. Under this program the bank hires retired managers as advisers to help small businessmen solve their management problems for a minimal fee.

The advisers are selected for their competence, their experience in the area in which the customer company operates. The bank can presently call upon about 2,000 advisers for a wide choice of assignments. In the fiscal year 1980, the bank completed more than 14,000 assignments. The program was well received and it is highly regarded. It is interesting to note that the majority of CASE customers do not borrow money from the bank. In other words, the service is also extended to those whose financial position is already fairly secure.

The second part of the bank's management services deals with the promotion of sound management practices for owners or managers of small businesses through management training. It is one thing to help someone set up the management of his business by way of a temporary program, but without the possibility of sharpening the business acumen of his staff the program falls short of the stated objective. Therefore, the bank offers training by way of courses, seminars and other meetings. During the 1980 fiscal year, more than 25,000 businessmen have attended approximately 1,700 seminars held by the bank on matters relating to commercialization, taxation, bookkeeping and cost control. In the framework of its management training, the bank has also developed a number of 30-hour courses which it offers to provincial and territorial authorities in charge of education. This material is used to train adults in community colleges and elsewhere and is also meant for people in charge of small businesses or those who intend to go into business for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the third part of the bank's management services consists of giving information with respect to business support programs at all levels of government. This objective

has been met through the setting up of new branches in rural areas across the country. Last year, bank offices were responsible for more than 90,000 client contacts. The bank also publishes a series of brochures on business management entitled "Minding Your Own Business" as well as a quarterly bulletin "Small Business News", and also makes available a lot of information on specialized services from various other departments and in particular the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, and the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. These publications deal with matters of interest to small business and have an extensive distribution. Moreover, each of the bank's offices houses a reference library allowing small business to have easy access to works of interest.

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[English]

The Federal Business Development Bank is a major part of the government's financial support program for small business. Its leadership and innovation has contributed significantly to the development of the private term lending market in Canada for small businesses. But the bank is much more than that. In addition to its financial services, the bank provides, as I said previously, a wide range of management services in support of small businesses.

The breadth of the bank mandate is a reflection of the government's commitment of support to a viable and growing small business sector. The bill in front of us is a clear indication of the government's direction in this area, the right direction. I take great pleasure in supporting this piece of legislation.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak in favour of Bill C-20, to increase the lending ability of the Federal Business Development Bank. This is my first speech in this House, and I would ask for your indulgence and that of hon. members opposite while I place on the record some of the traditional remarks which a member makes on the occasion of his first speech. I can assure this House that they will be brief and that I will then go on to discuss the bill before us.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to carry my congratulations to Madam Speaker on her appointment. I feel that it is an honour that she richly deserves and I am sure that she will acquit herself in the chair with dignity and fairness, the same dignity and fairness which we have come to expect from the Speakers of this House.

It is an honour and a privilege for me to represent the riding of Simcoe North. For several years my riding was represented by Dr. Philip Bernard Rynard, and his service on behalf of his constituents is a legend in my riding.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: His service to this House is also well known because of his lifelong interest in health and welfare. He has