

*Routine Proceedings*

But if we compare that to what the Minister of Human Resources Development is suggesting when he says that access to credit will be made easier for students, we quickly understand the equation. To save public funds, the government is forcing individuals into debt. What is the impact of this on SMEs? Are they going to be pushed deeper into debt or will they really get help to start up or develop domestically or internationally?

Thus, without even conducting a cost-benefit analysis, which could have shown the efficiency of the program and indicated which policy was preferable with respect to tariffs, the minister is acting, in our view, as an amateur, increasing, without any consultation, the cost of financing SMEs. We can draw a parallel with the social reform whereby the government says that it will cut support to students, but they will be given the chance to go deeper into debt while the government sets up mechanisms to recover the loans it guaranteed.

I wonder whether this is a responsible way to behave for the government and especially the industry minister, in the present economic context. Although some people on the government side sometimes think we are the bad guys, I must congratulate the minister on announcing measures to reduce red tape.

Everybody is complaining and rightly so. Everybody agrees, every time you want to do something you have to fill out 16 different forms and send them all over. Therefore this is a good move by the government. Reducing red tape is something SMEs have been asking for for a long time in order to stop wasting time and resources. Imagine having to submit 119 pages of information to get \$10,000. Finally we are giving SMEs what they have been asking for.

However, I would like to point out to the minister that we are here to promote a sovereign Quebec and I mentioned the information highway where the message to the minister was to open up to negotiation and co-operation. The minister did not open up, so I remind him that under our option, a level of government—the federal level—will disappear, thereby reducing red tape, inefficiencies and regulations often at cross purposes, making our industry much more efficient. This is a clear goal.

The government is continuously reminding us that we must create the atmosphere for growth in the high-technology sector. We agree. SMEs in that area represent the future of our industrial base. True, high-tech SMEs are creating the jobs of tomorrow and will be mainly responsible for our ability to maintain the high standard of living we need and must have.

It is therefore regrettable that the government would not propose any policy to stimulate their growth and, in particular, improve their financing. We must realize that these companies

pursue speculative endeavours and have specific financing problems. Banks are seldom willing to finance technology and this brings me back to the role of government. It says it wants to recover its money, and it acts like a banker. We know what a bank does, it loans money when it is reasonably certain that it is secure. Precisely what the government is doing.

Yet, there are technological areas where risk is high. It is impossible to act like a banker in the sense that we cannot expect all the guarantees that a bank would normally require. That is obvious.

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If we really want to encourage the development of these businesses, we must provide ways to find more appropriate funding for them. In our dissenting opinion to the report of the industry committee we proposed extending the Small Businesses Loans Act in order to fund the working capital of all businesses. This would have made it possible to support the financing of small and medium size high-tech enterprises. Instead, this government proposes a piecemeal strategy with a program that would only provide exclusively for the financing of exporting SMEs.

Even the Canadian Association of Exporters recommended to the industry committee—and I do not know if the minister has heard about it—that the working capital of exporting SMEs be financed under the act. The government does not listen to the people involved.

As for infrastructure, the minister praises the transport minister's policy. We have seen what has been going on in that area up to now and we are not at all heartened. If this is an indication of what this government intends to do about transportation, we should expect the worst.

We believe that the national policy on airports, among others, is nothing but a disguised way to pass on the cost of regional transportation to municipal and provincial governments. This process had begun under the previous government and we already see costs being passed on to other levels of government.

Furthermore, the federal government has the nerve—and this is important because they did it in several departments—to keep the revenue from the national network of airports and use it to finance regional airport infrastructure while disavowing any responsibility for their operating costs. This is how the federal government wants to manage public property and public funds throughout Canada.

This is what federalism is all about. This is it. The federal government keeps the power even though it cuts funds and totally withdraws from the administration of services. As we were told, it does not have any choice, it is debt-ridden. It will have no choice but to turn to the provinces for help, and will be