

Abbott, Trudeau jointly ^{Miss} announce new small business initiatives

A package of new strategies for Canada's small business sector, intended to ease the lot of small businessmen, was served up by Mississauga MP Tony Abbott and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau at a joint press conference yesterday in Ottawa.

Federal sales tax amendments, the provision of more investment capital, improved access to government procured contracts and further reductions in the paper burden are among the initiatives announced. *in May 24/78*

The Minister of State for Small Business has been on the hot seat recently for what Opposition critics say is a lack of action and failure to come up with new programs.

The measures as a whole will serve, Abbott said, to "lessen the irritants" experienced by small businessmen. He promised more action and programs in the future.

Among those irritants is paper burden. Small businessmen will have the opportunity to air their complaints about the number of forms they fill out annually at a series of hearings Abbott announced would be set up.

The Federal Council of Paperburden, Abbott said, will conduct public hearings to find ways to cut the estimated \$10 billion cost of filling out forms each year.

He also noted that the bill to amend the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act (CALURA), which has passed second reading in the House of Commons, aims to relieve some 70,000 small businesses from filing reports under the Act. The bill's provisions, he said, are aimed at streamlining operations.

Officials in the Office of Paperburden, he said, are looking at several ways to reduce the paperwork which small businessmen often complain is their number one problem.

Abbott also announced that a national sourcing list will be prepared and maintained by the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce to help small and medium-sized companies market their products and identify market opportunities.

"This is another initiative in our drive to do everything to help the small businessmen. In addition to a computerized sourcing system that will assist companies in marketing home and abroad, there will be a business opportunity system which will notify participating companies of market opportunities for their products," he said.

A series of information bulletins, which will provide specific news items useful to small enterprises, will also be initiated, he said.

Abbott also outlined the basis of a \$5.4 million program that will be known as the Small Business Intern Program, through which some 800 permanent jobs for recent Canadian university and community college graduates will be created.

Under this program, the federal government will pay 50 per cent of the wages earned by the selected intern up to a maximum of \$575 per month, for an initial period not exceeding 12 months.

"We feel these young people have the knowledge and enthusiasm to help small and medium size business in such disciplines as commerce, business administration, accounting and engineering," Abbott said.

Incorporated firms with up to 300 employees are eligible to receive payments.

Abbott is also expected to table in the House of Commons today, a paper on venture capital. The result of a long term study, Abbott said he hoped the paper "would ultimately lead to legislation."

The proposal involves the setting up of investment companies that would deal with small businesses.

"Providing more venture capital to small businesses has been one of my prime concerns. These initiatives are a step in the right direction."

On Thursday, Finance Minister Jean Chretien, Abbott added, will introduce several tax measures of particular interest to small businesses, although he said he could not give details of those measures.

"Generally, all of these things are intended to make life a lot easier for Canada's small businesses — that are such a vital sector in our economy," Abbott said.