

*Government Orders*

additional steps to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of our removal procedures.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you are aware, as are other members of the House, of the efforts my department has undertaken to improve our service to the public through our offices in Canada and overseas.

Those efforts will continue. Centralized information centres will provide people with quicker access to information on the status of applications. The department will increase the use of mail-in and drop-off services and we will introduce more user-friendly application and information forms.

We have also proposed a number of changes to make more flexible the way in which we handle documents for visitors, students and returning residents.

On a per capita basis, Canada receives more immigrants and accepts more refugees than any other country in the world. Our current Immigration Act dates back to 1976. It was not designed to handle the numbers of people now trying to enter Canada. The system is showing signs of strain. It is important that we act now to bring the system in line with the realities of the 1990s.

A failure to respond now will have significant consequences. Backlogs in applications will lead to longer processing delays and ever escalating costs. Illegal immigration will only continue to grow and our ability to control its impact on our programs will diminish. None of these results is fair to the prospective immigrant, the refugee and the Canadian taxpayer.

[*English*]

More important, our ability to respond to the needs of Canadians will be undermined if we do not act now. Without effective control over the number and categories of immigrants coming to Canada we cannot ensure that immigration continues to serve the best interests of Canada.

At the outset of this debate let us be very clear about whom these amendments are meant to serve. They are not meant to satisfy those who would have no room in their small world for the contribution of yet another generation of immigrants. They are not meant to satisfy those who deny their own immigrant roots or who fail to see the reality of a global community that grows closer

together by the minute. Nor are they meant to satisfy those who feel Canadian resources are limitless, that there is no need for rules and that national borders are meaningless concepts.

These amendments to our Immigration Act will not satisfy those who want to slam the door and they will not satisfy those who want us to give away the store.

However, I am confident that the vast majority of Canadians will understand these amendments for what they are: pragmatic and sensible changes that will preserve the integrity of an immigration program that has contributed to our sense of identity and served as a source of prosperity for more than 125 years.

That is what these changes are about.

In closing, I would like to quote Neil Bissoondath one last time. He said:

In the end I am as at home in Montreal as I am in Vancouver, in Toronto as in Quebec City, in English as in French. Nowhere have I felt myself a stranger. The immigrant who, 19 years ago, gratefully embraced Toronto has become the citizen who has gratefully embraced Canada. While I am abroad and miss home, it is this country—its air, its sounds, its smells—that I long for. It is here, everywhere, that I find the comforts of home.

All of us, no matter where we were born or where our parents and ancestors came from, can endorse such words, for they ring true. We have a great and wonderful country, the envy of the world, and let us get on with our work of keeping Canada unified, prosperous and generous.

As an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or (2) with respect to second reading of Bill C-86, an act to amend the Immigration Act and other acts in consequence thereof, and under the provision of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice of my intention to move a time allocation motion at the next sitting of the House for the purpose of allotting a specified number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

**Mr. Mills:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder, since we are only going to have one speaker from each party today, if I could get consent of the House to put a couple of short questions to the minister as we have him here in the House today and he may not be here for the debate on Monday.