

*Government Orders*

ground to stop the processing of an individual's application to enter into the immigration or refugee process.

This will serve a number of purposes. It will save Canadian taxpayers money because they will not have to pay for the processing of cases which would be appropriately rejected in any case. It will save immigration officials time which can be better spent processing the claims of applicants without a criminal background. More time spent studying these routine applications means fraudulent claims are less likely to be approved, giving the immigration department more credibility in the eyes of Canadians. Finally, the measure makes the common sense move of protecting the Canadian public from foreign born criminals who want to come to our country. All of these are excellent goals.

Unfortunately, this legislation does not go far enough to ensure they are achieved. The problem is that immigration officers are still not being given the tools to do their job. Officers now have the power to refuse to process applications if they discover a criminal background. At the same time, they are not being given the power to do background checks on those applicants. In fact it was recently revealed by a member of the Canada employment and immigration union that refugee claimants are not given security screenings before facing the refugee board. The proposed legislation gives the immigration officers necessary new powers but does not grant them the means to exercise them. An illustration of the problem was a news report by the *Canadian Press* published September 12. The report stated that there are very severe guidelines which restrict immigration officials as to what they may ask refugee claimants. The report also stated that this could mean people who should not get into Canada may be slipping past the immigration and refugee board.

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Here are a few examples of those guidelines. Officials cannot request information from the immigration department about a refugee aside from identity papers and passports. This means officers cannot check statements made at a hearing against the claims made when the refugee first entered Canada. Officers cannot investigate claims through sources such as the police. Only board officials can now use public record sources.

Officers may not press reluctant claimants for answers on particular issues because that could be perceived as being adversarial.

The effect of this bill is to grant powers to officers without giving them means to exercise these powers. It would be like giving a highway patrolman the power to arrest speeders without allowing him to use radar to detect those speeders.

This leads us to the second major reason why the Reform Party is opposing this bill. That reason is enforcement.

One of the intentions of this bill is to detect problems early in a system so that deportation orders can be issued to those who do not qualify. However, as we have seen over the past year, there have been serious problems with those deportation orders.

Several high profile cases have demonstrated that the issuing of deportation orders does not ensure removal. The numbers indicate that of 25,000 deportation orders last year, only 8,200 were verifiably carried out. Despite the fact that 1,200 criminals were deported last year, 3,000 more deportable criminals disappeared and have not been found.

Immigration enforcement officers are so overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of deportables that they are unable to execute a removal order unless the individual voluntarily turns up.

In Toronto there are 30 enforcement officers charged with the execution of deportation orders or investigation of legal residency of 40,000 cases. More deportation orders will likely only increase the backlog rather than actually clear many more people out of the country.

The greatest benefit of this legislation is that it would prevent some criminals from getting into the immigration and refugee system, but should the aim of the government not be a bit higher than this? A few simple changes could put some real teeth in this legislation.

To begin with, how about granting more power to individual immigration officers? This would mean giving them the power to do background checks and giving them greater access to data banks. This could save Canadian taxpayers millions of dollars as well.

If I understand correctly the intentions of the legislation before us today, the government is interested in adding an element of common sense to the process. This legislation is saying Canadians do not want immigrants or refugees with criminal backgrounds to come into this country.

Why do we not give the immigration officers the means to find this out before their cases come before the immigration refugee board? It would save all involved time and prevent costly hearings which would only result in the dismissal of the application in any case.

Another measure which would give this legislation teeth would be the beefing up of the enforcement of deportation orders. I am aware that in response to public pressure the minister did appoint extra staff to deal with this problem. Is this handful of extra officers really having an effect? The government needs to devote even further resources to staff and to the enforcement of deportation orders. Warrants should be issued so that the whole police network can enforce these immigration laws.