

Oral Questions

\$800 for conversion from oil to natural gas or to electricity wherever this is feasible.

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[English]

IMMIGRATION**VISA REQUIREMENT FOR INDIAN NATIONALS VISITING CANADA**

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Would the minister tell the House why, having failed to supply adequate immigration services in India and in Canadian ports of entry, thus causing an extraordinary backlog of Indian nationals waiting to visit or seek refugee status in Canada, he chose to resolve the problem he created by a measure which discriminates against the largest member of the Commonwealth, requiring visas for all Indian nationals wishing to visit Canada? Would the minister tell us why?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): If the hon. member were to look at the decision we took a week ago relating to the problem faced at ports of entry in Canada, with large numbers of people coming from India claiming refugee status, he would realize the only recourse we have, after consultations with the Indian community and with the Indian government, would be to provide some review of their status before arriving in Canada to save them from being victimized by very unscrupulous agents in India who were giving them false information about what they could expect when they arrived in Canada.

The purpose is not to discriminate; far from that. It is to make sure that people would be treated equally and fairly under the immigration system, and that the refugee system itself would be protected against that kind of abuse. That was the reason for the decision. I believe it would be wrong for the hon. member to make false charges of discrimination when, in fact, what we are trying to do is to protect a system of immigration which is the fairest in the world.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

LOCATION OF CANADIAN IMMIGRATION SERVICES IN INDIA

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): As a supplementary I would ask the minister, in light of the fact that he does not seem prepared to rescind his decision, will he consider relocating some of the immigration consular staff within India, making our service more geographically available to all parts of India, and will he take the necessary steps to ensure that all bona fide visitors to Canada can obtain visas upon arrival at Canadian ports of entry?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I should like to correct some of the so-called facts that the hon. member mentioned. First, one receives a visa in India, not when one arrives in Canada. Second, we have already allocated through the offices of the

Secretary of State for External Affairs additional officers to go to India, and we have improved the facilities of the High Commission Office there. That was done in consultation with the High Commission Office and the Indian government, who indicated their concern about the problem of a number of people arriving in Canada claiming false status and, therefore, giving credence to a separatist movement in India.

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AUDITOR GENERAL**OPINION ON GOVERNMENT'S DEFICIT POSITION**

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I direct my question to the Minister of Supply and Services in his capacity as Receiver General of Canada. Did the minister read, prior to transmitting it to the Minister of Finance, the report of the Auditor General that contains the first qualified opinion in the history of Canada on the propriety of the government accounts, indicating there has been an understatement of the government's deficit position by a total in excess of \$8 billion, an 8 per cent increase in the cumulative deficit of the government? Did he read that in the report? And when he transmitted the report to the Minister of Finance did he make any recommendations to him?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board): The points raised by the Auditor General are the same that have been made in the past, as the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton knows. What is significant is that the Auditor General has stated that the accounts have been prepared in accordance with the stated principles which have always governed the preparation of the accounts. While it is true that the finger is pointed at certain accounting practices which persisted for many years, I would also point out there are many other areas which have to be addressed.

We have a study under way through the office of the Comptroller General to examine different ways whereby the accounts of Canada should be properly presented. I would point out that, for example, while the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton is concentrating on liabilities which he is often wont to do, he neglects to point out that many assets of the Government of Canada—accounts receivable, gold, land—are not in fact recorded either. Look at the Accounts of Canada in perspective and let us not try to exaggerate the situation, which is one that has already been noted in the past.

REQUEST THAT ACTION BE TAKEN IN BUDGET

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I am not the one looking at the report; it is the Auditor General of Canada who has looked at the statement of accounts. The Auditor General indicated the government accounting is not valid and is not in accordance with normal accounting practices. There are reservations. My question to the Receiver General is clearly on whether or not that will be corrected.