

Private Members' Business

be heard at third reading instead. I found his remarks very profound and interesting, given his vast knowledge.

Given the interest of so many people, I wonder if by unanimous consent we could do that because it involves improving benefits to so many Canadians who deserve it so much.

The Deputy Speaker: The point has been made that we are at third reading of the bill, so there will not be a committee process for the bill to go through. We can do it by unanimous consent.

An hon. member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is not unanimous consent.

It being 1.30 p.m., we will now proceed to Private Members' Business.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.) moved that Bill C-316, an act to amend the Immigration Act and the Transfer of Offenders Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to debate Bill C-316, an act to amend the Immigration Act and the Transfer of Offenders Act.

I would like to start by thanking the members of the Private Members' Business subcommittee for realizing the importance of this legislation to the social fabric of our nation. Moreover by making this private member's bill votable, subcommittee members have acted upon a key principle which has been advocated by our minister of immigration in many forums.

The minister and I on numerous occasions have said that Canada has a proud tradition of welcoming immigrants. Members know that both of us have personally benefited from that tradition.

When I came to Canada from Croatia in 1968, I agreed to obey the laws of this nation. At that time I did not have the same rights as those who were already citizens. I could not vote. I could not have been a member of Parliament nor work for the federal government. I obeyed the law and was particularly careful to be on my best behaviour.

The day that I finally did become a citizen was one of the happiest days of my life. To this day I have continued to uphold the laws and virtues of this country and I will continue to do so.

The majority of our immigrants are model citizens. They work very hard to succeed in this country and they do so in a law-abiding manner.

• (1335)

However, a very small group of immigrants, and for that matter visitors, do not play by the rules. Some in this very small group have come to this great country, taken advantage of its generosity and disobeyed its laws. I would like those individuals to know that law-abiding immigrants and for that matter all Canadians, firmly believe that those individuals who are not citizens and who repeatedly show disrespect for the laws and people of Canada do not deserve to be here.

Our laws have always recognized that serious criminality should have the consequence of removal from Canada. The current Immigration Act explicitly states as much and my bill reinforces that principle.

The immigration enforcement improvement act simply aims to improve the way in which removal of violent offenders is executed. It streamlines a deportation procedure which has failed in the past, a procedure which has led to several inexcusable tragedies. Members may recall two of these inexcusable tragedies which occurred last spring.

In April of last year, a 23-year old young woman by the name of Georgina Leimonis was murdered in the trendy Toronto restaurant, Just Desserts. She had been having coffee with her boyfriend. One of her killers, O'Neil Grant, was a non-citizen with a lengthy criminal record. Prior to the murder, he had been granted a five year stay of his deportation. Lawrence Augustus Brown, the shooter, had immigrated to Canada 10 years earlier and also had an extensive criminal record.

The murder of Georgina Leimonis sent shock waves through Toronto and the entire country. In my riding of Cambridge, 20 grade 10 students from Galt Collegiate took the time to express their shock and anger over the murder of this young, vibrant woman. Their letters moved me to a point where I knew something had to be done. I would like to share some of their comments with members here today. Amy Gibson wrote:

We like to think of Canada as the best country in the world and I agree most of the time. We have a lot of freedom here—but what happens when we have so much freedom that we lose security? The murder of Georgina Leimonis is a good example. She didn't do anything wrong, she was innocently sitting in a cafe when she was shot. Soon we will be afraid to leave our houses.

Katharina Daldrup wrote:

I just immigrated to Canada 23 months ago and had found it to be a non-violent country. I was shocked by this incident and strongly feel that everything possible must be done to prevent incidents like this one.

Devon Edwards echoed the comments of the majority of his classmates when he expressed how deeply saddened he was to read of the murder of Georgina Leimonis.