

Doctors and hospital administrators know that they cannot do that and they accept it. Everyone has probably been to an emergency ward. We know that they could be more efficient. Sick and bleeding people have to wait in the corridors because there are not enough rooms available. We have all had friends and families, if not ourselves, in that situation. We could not understand why we had to wait to be attended to, but there were other people ahead of us who were sick as well. At least hospitals do not close their doors. They do not tell you to take your sickness or injury elsewhere. They allow you in and treat you as soon as humanly possible.

That should be the system with regard to immigration. It is clearly unacceptable to try to maximize efficiency by minimizing the number of refugees who can access it. The moral way to treat refugee claimants is to allow them to be heard. If necessary, we must increase the number of refugee board members. It is better to do that than to increase the number of officers at border points who will make prejudgments.

It must be difficult for government Members and Ministers to rationalize a prescreening stage. I am sure that the people who understand the Bill have said the same things to government Members as they have said to me. I am moved by those arguments, and not only because I happen to be in this place at this time in the Opposition. I do not talk about these things only for the sake of talking. We are all in favour of maximizing efficiency, but my colleagues and I are also interested in protecting individuals who seek our assistance.

What is a safe country and why do we have such a concept? We have asked the Government why it has such a policy. The policy is basically that if a refugee comes from country A passing through country B, which is on our list of so-called safe countries, and arrives in country B, Canada, then whether they were in country B for five minutes, five hours, five days, or five months, they will be sent back to country B with no questions asked. We will wash our hands of responsibility. We will play the role of Pontius Pilot in dealing with the plight of refugees.

If we are going to place people in safe third countries we should define precisely which countries those are in order that we can be sure they will face no danger there. We do not object to sending claimants back to a third country where they have enjoyed refugee status, if they have enjoyed protection and can live a normal life there. There are many people in the backlog who have not enjoyed such protection and are threatened with being returned to a land where they will be persecuted. Therefore, people who enjoy refugee status in another country should take advantage of it and allow us to extend the same courtesy to others who need it. After due processing it would be proper and legitimate for Canada to ask such individuals to complete their processing in that safe country.

Prescreening and a safe country concept together result in a danger of prejudgment. Individuals are placed in jeopardy.

I see that you are signalling that it is one o'clock, Mr. Speaker. I will continue following Question Period.

S. O. 21

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being one o'clock I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this day.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 21

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

MEECH LAKE ACCORD—POSITION OF NEW BRUNSWICK LIBERAL PARTY LEADER

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, occasionally a small piece of encouraging good news comes to our attention. In New Brunswick, Liberal Leader Frank McKenna, a constitutional expert, has said that if he is elected Premier he will endeavour to improve the Meech Lake Accord.

Mr. McKenna cites his concern for women's rights, the rights of francophones outside Quebec, and aboriginal rights. I share all of those apprehensions with this Leader and I would add equality for Canada's northerners under our Constitution to that list.

I urge the Government to adopt the proposed Liberal amendments to the Meech Lake Accord before we proceed with its ratification in the House.

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[Translation]

SPORTS

MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL MARATHON—CONGRATULATIONS TO PARTICIPANTS

Mr. Richard Grisé (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, the town of Saint-Bruno de Montarville has earned distinction at Montreal's IXth International Marathon. A new page of history was written yesterday at the IXth International Marathon in Montreal when, for the first time ever, Canadian athlete Peter Maher led the best competitors to the wire, and two female athletes, Jacqueline Gareau and Nicole Caisse, both residents of Saint-Bruno de Montarville in the riding of Chambly, came in first and third respectively.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government, the Canadian people, and especially the residents of the riding of Chambly, I extend congratulations to all participants in the Montreal IXth International Marathon, and more particularly to Jacqueline Gareau and Nicole Caisse. Marathon President Serge Arseneault, another resident of Saint-Bruno de Montarville, also deserves commendation for his outstanding work.