

*Government Orders*

as 250,000 newcomers, or almost three times as many people as we welcomed a decade ago.

Even with the highest immigration rate in the world, we cannot meet the demand of all those who want in. Because there is a finite number of people we can accommodate each year, an increasing number of people are seeking ways to bypass the regular immigration process.

Canada is not alone in facing this problem; the Germans, the Australians, the British, the French, the Americans, indeed most developed nations, are faced with the same problem. It is an issue that cannot be ignored because it ultimately threatens the very viability of established immigration programs.

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The federal government has an obligation to protect the integrity of these vital programs. We will respond to that need by taking a number of steps to protect these programs, at home, at our borders and overseas.

Overseas we will provide further training and technological assistance to our own staff and to airline personnel to help them identify fraudulent documents and intercept illegal migrants before they reach Canada. We will also extend the rule governing criminal inadmissibility. This will allow us to keep out individuals who may have a criminal record but who are known members of criminal or terrorist organizations.

At our borders, we will give immigration staff the authority to search individuals and to seize documents and vehicles used in smuggling people into Canada.

We will also expand an authority the current law already gives the department and that is the department's authority to use fingerprints and photographs to establish the identity of people seeking admission to Canada. These procedures will be extended to cover all individuals who make refugee claims.

Canadians want their country to provide protection to those fleeing persecution. They insist that we leave a light in the window for those hounded from their homelands. But Canadians have a right to know whom we are welcoming to this country on their behalf. They have a right to know who is entering their home.

When the generosity of Canada's immigration program is abused, the public's confidence in the value and effectiveness of immigration is shaken. Abuse of the program upsets everyone, newcomers and native born alike.

The problem of multiple refugee claims is a good example of an issue where the actions of a few people erode the confidence and trust of the broader community.

Yet we cannot effectively control this type of limited but costly abuse, largely because we lack the tools to monitor the identity of people. The fragility of the system became patently obvious when a single individual is capable of successfully making 17 refugee claims.

Expanding the use of photographs and fingerprints, with the appropriate safeguards for the individual in place, will help us eliminate a problem which hurts everyone.

At home, we are proposing a number of new measures, including legislative amendments to prevent criminals from using our refugee system to avoid justice in their own countries.

By defending the integrity of these programs, we achieve two things. First, we preserve the social and economic benefits of these vital national programs. Second, we maintain public confidence in our immigration and refugee systems.

Canadians have earned a special position in the world for our work on behalf of refugees. In fact these efforts earned the people of Canada the Nansen Medal in 1986. It was the first time the United Nations has recognized an entire nation for its work.

The plain fact is that Canada has the highest refugee acceptance rate of any nation in the world and it has occupied that position for some time now.

But despite our international reputation, we now have a refugee determination system that is working at maximum capacity and showing signs of strain. While we are able to process as many claims as we receive at some stages in the process, other components of the system, particularly the Federal Court, are experiencing large backlogs.