

*Government Orders*

At the present time we have the authority, Mr. Speaker, to set over-all levels of immigration; however, we lack the means to actually deliver on those targets.

For example, if 50,000 people, 50,000 eligible individuals, apply in a particular category during a specific year, the government must consider each of those obligations even though the annual plan may only have room for 25,000 applications. That is the law, and that is why we have backlogs.

The proposed changes will give us the means to more effectively control those numbers. It will introduce greater certainty to our planning. Greater certainty means fewer delays, it means more predictable processing times and greater fairness for applicants.

Specifically, I have proposed the introduction of three management streams for selecting immigrants. Stream one will have no fixed limit on applications for its various categories. The stream could include, for example, spouses and dependent children, convention refugees and immigrant investors. Applicants will be processed according to specific time standards. For example, our objective will be to process routine immediate-family applicants within six months regardless of whether the application is made in Germany or in India. Stream two will operate on a first-come-first served basis. There will be a ceiling for applications from each group within this stream. Parents and grandparents, refugees processed abroad, and immigrants with arranged employment could be included in stream two.

For some groups, once the ceiling was reached no more applications would be processed. Others would be able to reapply in the next planning period. These changes would stop backlogs from accumulating.

In the third stream, we select for excellence, accepting only the most highly qualified individuals. This stream could be composed largely of individuals from the independent categories or entrepreneurs, or people qualified in designated occupations.

Again, there will be a ceiling for each group within the stream. Only the allotted number of applications will be accepted. This approach to managing the program will give us the means to eliminate the build-up of backlogs which drain our resources and reduce our flexibility to help others.

[*Translation*]

The House should also be aware, Mr. Speaker, that these proposals do not change the decision-making authority for the selection of immigrants contained in federal-provincial agreements. In particular, the changes will be consistent with the Canada-Quebec Accord on Immigration. The hon. member for Joliette was concerned about that at some point. These provisions will be fully respected.

We are also proposing a measure to further extend the economic and social benefits of immigration to the regions. Not every area of the country currently benefits from the program. Some regions find it difficult to attract newcomers.

In 1991, 3.5 per cent of immigrants went to communities of less than 100,000 people and only 1 per cent went to communities of less than 50,000 people. However, 68 per cent of immigrants went to cities of over 500,000 people.

To encourage a better distribution of this pool of talent, some skilled immigrants will be offered a contract-like arrangement. As a condition of their acceptance to Canada, they will be required to settle in a community where the number of people having their specific skills would otherwise be insufficient to meet the needs of that region. They would be required to live in the community for a limited period of time.

Individuals who choose to participate in this program will do so fully aware that their application has earned additional consideration as a consequence of their willingness to settle in a designated location. There is nothing coercive about this measure.

Our hope is that individuals will want to stay in a particular community once they are settled. But ultimately, that hope is dependent on a number of things, including the ability of the community to create the type of welcoming environment which will cause individuals to set down roots.

[*English*]

Canada has been ranked as the best place in the world in which to live. Surely those who prepared that assessment must have considered the generosity and openness of our immigration and refugee programs when they made their decisions. On a per capita basis, we accept more immigrants than any other nation in the world. Today about one in six Canadians was born somewhere other than in Canada. This year we will welcome as many