

• (1230)

I think it clearly shows how important family class immigration is to this Government, a policy that will be further reflected in changes that will expand the criteria for this class. These changes in the regulations will mean that individuals selected for immigration to Canada or being sponsored by family members already in Canada may include sons and daughters aged 21 or over, if they have never been married. Previously, children over 21 were not considered dependents and were assessed as assisted relatives.

In addition, the assisted relatives selection criteria will be amended to increase the additional number of points for married children and brothers and sisters from 10 to 15. These measures reflect the spirit and the intent of the recommendations of the standing committee and provide more opportunities for family members to be reunited.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the subject of immigrants and refugees has provoked some very lively debate in recent months. The policies and procedures inherited by this Government proved inadequate to cope with the new situations and new challenges, due especially to the general and increasing pressure of economic migration and to the ongoing question of genuine refugees.

[English]

The Government has therefore been required to take major initiatives to strengthen Canadian policy and to reaffirm Canada's obligations and responsibilities in these areas, both nationally and internationally. These measures ensure that Canada's immigration policy will remain open and outward-looking to all peoples of the world. We have opened up new opportunities for families to reunite. We have responded to the family reunification recommendations of the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration. We have streamlined the processing system for the family class.

At the same time, we have signalled clearly that Canada's refugee policy will no longer be available as an alternative avenue for immigration. We have taken interim control measures to manage the flow of illegal migrants. We have tabled a Bill on refugee determination designed to streamline that process and to curb abuse of the system. We have tabled a Bill to increase penalties for smugglers and prevent organized fraud.

We have also begun the productivity review I referred to earlier. In conjunction with the Department of External Affairs we are seeking ways to do more for less in the area of processing which it is to be hoped will lead to marked improvements in service for all our clients.

I would like to turn now to the annual refugee plan which is included in the report. I am concerned that recent criticism of the proposed refugee legislation has coloured the perception, not only of concerned refugee aid and advocacy groups, but of the average Canadian. I wish to make it absolutely clear that the longstanding generosity of the Canadian people to the

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legitimate refugee in need of Canada's protection is not only reaffirmed by the Government but enhanced.

The levels for landings of government-assisted refugees have been increased by 1,000 to 13,000 in 1988. This is an increase of some 30 per cent in direct government-sponsored refugees since the Government took office.

It is also expected, Sir, that some 2,000 people will be landed as refugees in the course of 1988 after determination by the Refugee Status Advisory Committee. As well, a planning range for humanitarian admissions under special circumstances has also been established and set at between 3,000 and 6,000. Finally, as all Members know, there remains no level or limit to private refugee sponsorship.

[Translation]

There are about 10 to 15 million refugees throughout the world. However, resettlement far from their country of origin is seldom the answer to their problems. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees prefers other solutions such as voluntary repatriation or resettlement in countries of first asylum in the same region.

However, for those who have no other option, resettlement in a third country, with the help of government and private sector, may be the answer.

Canada uses its acceptance program abroad to help refugees who are in greatest need and also to urge other resettlement countries to follow its example. In this respect, a concerted effort by the international community removes some of the pressure on countries of first asylum and encourages them to keep playing their essential role.

I may add that in response to concerns expressed by Canadian non-governmental organizations, the Government will sponsor increased numbers of refugees from Latin America and Eastern Europe in 1988.

I can, therefore, state before the House without any hesitation that since the present Government came to power, Canada's commitment to refugees the world over has never been as serious as it is now, and that as long as the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) leads this Government, this trend will continue in the future.

Mr. Speaker, it is not a coincidence that nearly 100 countries, members of the Commonwealth and the francophonie, now see Canada as a source of moral leadership. These countries have placed their confidence in the courage and determination being shown by the Leader of this Government and of our country, never to compromise our principles on human rights.

[English]

We will fulfil, to an ever greater degree in the future than we have in the past, those humanitarian obligations we have freely entered into which have now become so vital a part of our national identity. We will continue to lead the world in seeking constructive solutions and answers to these critical