

*Private Members' Business*

ment it states while there may be increasing concerns about the number of immigrants coming to Canada there is evidence to suggest that these concerns are linked as much to issues of unemployment and the economy as they are to issues of diversity. That is in the government's own discussion paper.

Another question asked on page 13 is a question not unrelated to the one we are debating here today: should immigration be managed in response to the business cycle or only on the basis of long term social goals?

Right there the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and those who work with him have asked the types of questions that are related to the motion we discuss here today.

Keep in mind that the motion addresses immigration levels in a weak economy; high unemployment and all of the other manifestations of a weak economy. It is clear that the issue has been addressed. At least if it has been addressed, it may not have been answered, but an answer is being sought from Canadians.

Let us use this debate to focus on that particular issue, the issue of immigrations levels in a weak economy, and hopefully make a contribution to the broader consultation now under way.

What are the issues related to this? In a weak economy some Canadians ask, at least the ones I spoke to at the doors did, if we are able to receive as many immigrants in a weak economy as we are in a strong economy. Looking back over the last few years: immigration levels in 1991, 206,000; 1992, 220,000; 1993, 245,000; and the plan for 1994 would have us receive 250,000. There has been an increase and that increase took place at about the same time as the recession sucked the growth out of our economy.

If one was unemployed in Toronto or Scarborough in 1993 during the election campaign and simply took note of an increase of 30,000 or 40,000 people in metropolitan Toronto as immigrants, one might legitimately ask whether their arrival will decrease one's ability to find a job. It is a legitimate question and it is one that I do not think the government has definitively answered. It is a question we ask here today.

• (1740)

There is something else going on here while the question is being asked and if we had 30,000 or 40,000 new Canadians in metro Toronto and they all started looking for jobs I think the unemployment rate would shoot through the roof, but it did not through that period. It went up in the recession but it never did shoot through the roof.

It is clear that the arrival of new Canadians does not per se on a person per person basis directly cause unemployment. Nevertheless, the question I have already acknowledged is a legitimate one.

We can look for the answer perhaps in some economic studies that have been done. There are some related economic studies which show that immigrants can create just about as many jobs as they would take as workers. The suggestion in some of these economic studies is that there is a balance.

When immigration increases, when the people come here to Canada to start new lives, they immediately increase the demand for goods and services. They in effect become a part of the marketplace that generates jobs. I suppose that particular piece of economic news is a good one.

There was a 1991 study by the Economic Council of Canada called *Economic and Social Impacts of Immigration* which states at page 62 that immigration may influence the incomes and job opportunities of existing residents. It also says the impact of immigration on unemployment is almost certainly negligible, at least over the long term. Even temporary effects seem quite unlikely unless immigration increases very rapidly.

Immigration appeared to be increasing relatively rapidly between 1991, 1992, 1993, but in any event it has at least addressed the issue.

There is another statement in that same study by the Economic Council of Canada which gives its recommendations as an economic advisory body. It recommends that the level of immigration be gradually increased above the average levels of the last 25 years to reach 1 per cent of the population, that is a 1 per cent increase on a gross basis by the year 2015. These levels would be reviewed every five years to verify that the integration of immigrants is being successfully managed.

While Canadians gain economically in terms of per capita income from more immigration, the gain is so small that it did not weigh heavily in our recommendation. Nevertheless, nearly every immigrant more than pays for himself or herself in scale economies and in lighter future tax burdens. These are positive things for our economy.

We note that there is hardly ever an effect on unemployment rates. Nevertheless, at the doors in my constituency the fear was there. It may not be a justifiable fear but Canadians are telling me they are worried about it.

I want to assume that in the discussion here the motion I have placed here is dealing with a period of high unemployment, weak or no economic growth, and a level of high immigration receipt. If you are from a community in Canada that did not have a lot of immigrants coming to it you would not care too much about the motion. You would not care too much about the issue perhaps. However, this is the way my constituents have put this to me.