

*Government Orders*

have the economic skills and education to make a greater contribution to this nation.

We should also remember that family reunification here often means family disunification in the immigrant's native country. I am sure, Madam Speaker, you and other members of the House are familiar with the Statistics Canada report entitled Canada's changing immigrant population. The report noted how immigrants compared in many respects to native born Canadians. It found that a higher percentage of immigrants, 19 per cent, than native born Canadians, 13 per cent, had less than a grade nine education.

With the requirements of the Canadian economy changing to demand a stronger educational background in workers the government must place more of a priority on admitting people to this country that will be employable and competitive in our markets.

Proponents of unbridled immigration would probably argue against this policy. They would suggest tight restrictions on the sponsorship of family class immigrants are unduly cruel and uncaring. I am sure they would also suggest that emphasis on attracting immigrants to this country based on their potential economic contribution would be crassly materialistic and greedy.

I would say to these people that they are out of touch with current economic realities. Canada needs skilled workers if it is to remain competitive. By the same token what it does not need is further pressure placed on the social safety nets which are stretched to the breaking point at this time in any event.

Grassroots Canadians have been telling the Reform Party for a long time that they would like to see more emphasis placed on admitting to the country individuals with job skills and education and less emphasis placed on admitting individuals with little to offer. If the minister hopes to restore the faith of Canadians in the immigration system, responding to these desires would go a long way toward doing this.

Finally, I believe reducing current immigration levels would go a long way toward re-establishing the faith of Canadians in immigration policy and in the immigration system.

Before I begin making my argument for a reduction in immigration levels I must point out that it has been the policy of the Reform Party for some time to pursue lower immigration levels than are the current Canadian norm. Our party policy, which is based on the wishes and desires of our members, states that current immigration levels should be reduced to approximately 150,000 people per year.

Despite our opponents' attempts to label us as anti-immigrant we are in fact pro-immigrant. We simply believe current immigration levels are high and are not based on providing social or economic benefits to this country. It is clearly the desire of a

majority of Canadians to see immigration to the country lowered from current levels.

In March a survey commissioned by the federal government found that an unprecedented clear majority of Canadians, in the words of the *Globe and Mail* columnist, Michael Valpy, thought immigration levels were too high. As the same columnist noted, other research found the decision to set high levels was based on increasingly unrealistic economic expectations of immigrants.

It is very clear the majority of Canadians would like to see lower immigration levels. By refusing to lower the government's current level of 250,000 people per year the federal government and the immigration minister are quite clearly denying the will of the people.

I believe it is because of our emphasis on consulting our constituents that Reform became the first party in the House to pursue a policy of lower immigration levels. The government is beginning to see the wisdom of this approach. It is my sincere wish that the Liberal government and the minister of immigration soon alter their own policy.

● (1340)

Senior advisors working in the immigration department have recently recommended that immigration levels be reduced by 20 per cent to 200,000. This information was contained in an 18-page confidential report prepared for the minister of immigration. It notes that as a result of public consultations there was a sense the immigration program is out of control and urges that immigrants be better selected. Now that the minister has completed his tax funded study of public opinion on the issue of immigration I hope he will act on the knowledge he gained in the process.

The minister and the Liberal Party have a distinct disadvantage in this regard. Unlike Reform they do not believe in voting with or in some cases representing the interests and opinions of their constituents. The Reform Party has a distinct advantage in this area. We truly believe in listening to our members and constituents and voting with their interests despite our personal stance. This means during times the Liberal caucus met to discuss how they felt Canadians should be governed the Reform Party was out asking those same Canadians how they wanted to be governed. This meant very early on the Reform Party knew very clearly what actions Canadian people wanted to be taken.

I do not understand why the immigration minister and the Liberal government remain so irrationally committed to maintaining high levels of immigration. Canada continues to have the highest immigration level in the industrialized world. The result of this is that Canada has the highest growth rate in the west and ex-Soviet block at 1.4 per cent a year. That is a higher growth rate than Argentina, China, Thailand, Korea, Sri Lanka and Uruguay. This growing population requires an increased quantity of government provided services every year at a time when