

With my party colleagues, I think we have a human backlog, a backlog of refugee claimants in this country who are waiting for this Government to act realistically and sensitively.

That is why we kept hammering away at this issue during the election campaign last year. We also put the pressure on in committee and in the House during oral question period, in the hope that the situation would improve.

Today, we are not getting any answers from the Government that would be satisfactory to the people who are part of this backlog.

I hope that the Parliamentary Secretary's reply will be able to give these people some glimmer of hope, some confidence in our system. I hope we will get that kind of response today.

[English]

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Madam Speaker, when this Member decides what side of the street he wants to work on, I hope he lets the people of Canada know.

A year and a half ago when we were debating Bills C-84 and C-55, this Member, together with his colleagues, did everything they could to block the Bill while so-called refugees were streaming into Canada at a rate of 2,000 a month. Yes, 2,000 a month, and the Member made sure, with his colleagues, that while we passed the legislation in this House in September, it did not pass through the Senate until the following June. Now he wants to know why is the Government not doing something about the backlog that he helped create. So will he tell us which side of the street he is working on? He had better make up his mind.

I am glad that not all the people in Canada think as he does. I want to refer the Member to *The Globe and Mail* of yesterday, to Jeffrey Simpson's column, in which he says:

The four Toronto lawyers who are always yakking about Canada's immigration policies—Lorne Waldman, Mendel Green, Barbara Jackman and Marshall Drukarsh—find the backlog clearance program “impractical, improper and inhumane”. They consider it immoral that Canada might deport thousands of people who, in the lawyers' words, will not “meet the credible basis test for a refugee claim on the humanitarian and compassionate guidelines”.

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There is no doubt that we could hurry the process up. But if we failed on one point, this Member would be screaming his head off that we were violating somebody's human rights. He would be the first on his feet to say that we were not doing our job. So we will make this system work, and it is working. He should know that the flow of bogus claims has gone down. It is working. In the meantime, the process is established, the applications are being received. He knows that the appeal process is working. What bothers him is that Bill C-84 and Bill C-55 are doing the job, that genuine refugees are coming into Canada, as they should be able to, but that the bogus claims are being turned off and the system is working.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The Hon. Member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley (Mr. Gardiner).

FORESTRY—FEDERAL—PROVINCIAL AGREEMENTS—ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY—REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION AT FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in this adjournment debate to pursue further some of the questions I put to the Minister of State Forestry (Mr. Oberle) on April 10, in particular regarding the administration of forestry agreements with the provinces, the funding of such agreements, the creation of the Department, and a major study I made reference to. I look forward to the comments from the Parliamentary Secretary this evening.

First of all, I just want to comment. I have just come from a seminar that is in process, sponsored by Mr. Speaker, regarding Canada's role and responsibility in the crisis that our world's tropical and temperate rain forests are facing. What it points out to this House, and I think to all Canadians, is that forestry is a global issue as much as it is an issue here in Canada.

The point that I raised during my question was that following rumours and stories that were occurring during the November election campaign, the forestry agreement in British Columbia and other agreements in the country were going to end up being administered by some of those co-ordinating agencies that the Government has created. I refer specifically in western Canada to the Western Diversification Office, in the Maritimes to the Atlantic Opportunities Office, and to the federal agency in northern Ontario.