

Government Orders

The department has a clear and logical continuum of responsibilities, stretching from the time someone applies to come to Canada to the time she or he takes on the obligations of being a citizen. These responsibilities include immigration applications, immigration levels and selection, federal-provincial relations on immigration, visa requirements, refugee matters, enforcement, settlement, citizenship applications and registration, and citizenship promotion.

Of course, citizenship does not end with swearing an oath and acquiring a document. In some ways it is only the beginning. That is why the new department will take a lead role in strengthening the values, identity and commitment required of all citizens, those who are born here and those who choose to come here. Citizenship, like immigration, is a two-way street.

This week marks the 125th anniversary of Canada's immigration service. Indeed, today is the day. This bill marks one more step forward in our country's evolving and progressive history of citizenship and immigration legislation. This legislation will establish the integrated and simplified framework we need to address the challenges and the tremendous opportunities offered by immigration and citizenship.

All members of Parliament recognize the need to overhaul our immigration policies and to consider the long term role of immigration and nation building. All of us recognize the need to improve the system. All of us know the importance of redefining and reinforcing our citizenship policies. All of us understand the profound effect that migration issues are having upon the world today.

This government has moved actively on these important matters and we will continue to move actively. We are doing so, I believe, with a real sense of co-operation from all sides of this House. As Canadians we need to think about immigration in a bigger way. We need to get a clearer sense of where we are going and what kind of country we are building for the future. We have to clean up the problems with our immigration system, to stop the small number of abusers who undermine the overwhelming majority of hard working and honest newcomers.

A Canadian author once said that the refugee is the every man and every woman of our time. We have to push even harder to ensure that the international community comes to grips with the problems confronting 20 million refugees every year, and especially the question of protecting women who are fleeing gender-based persecution.

[Translation]

The government has acted on this and it will continue to act and we do so with the co-operation of everyone in the House of Commons. With the legislation to establish the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, we will have the integrated and simplified structure that is essential for solving problems and

taking advantage of the tremendous opportunities for immigration and citizenship.

• (2040)

[English]

This legislation establishes a modern, efficient and intelligent structure. With this structure we will be better equipped to introduce and carry through on fair and open policies to reunite families, offer safe haven for refugees, use immigration as a building block for economic growth and promote the concept and principles of citizenship.

The legislation is obviously not designed to lay out specific details of immigration and citizenship policies. What Bill C-35 does do is create a contemporary department that is best organized to carry out the policies we eventually agree on.

Madam Speaker, I began by saying that the legislation is short and straightforward and it is important.

[Translation]

I therefore urge members of the House of Commons to pass this bill without delay so that we can improve citizenship and immigration policies and thus contribute to our country's progress. This legislation is a step forward.

[English]

With this positive step forward Canada and all Canadians will benefit.

[Translation]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa): Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to speak in the debate on third reading of Bill C-35, an Act to establish the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

Once again, as I already said on second reading, I tell you that I will vote against this bill, for almost the same reasons that I mentioned in my speech on June 13 in this House.

Since there was no written document explaining this complex bill, which amends several laws, I carefully reread the speech given by the minister when he presented it. Unfortunately, the minister gave no details or precise justification at that time. His long speech covered only generalities concerning citizenship and immigration policy and of course he again praised his government.

I agree with the principle of the bill and with merging immigration and citizenship in the same department. However, some people, myself included, question the department's name. Should it not be called the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and not the other way around? That is, should immigration not come before citizenship?

In fact, the tens of thousands of new arrivals who come to settle in Canada every year are immigrants first and then several years later they become citizens.