

*Government Orders*

Therefore, I have given notice to both the parliamentary secretary and the opposition critic for the New Democratic Party and the Clerk, that I will be moving an amendment at Committee of the Whole, that the minister and her officials will have to keep the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration advised so that the committee would be able to review the situation.

I suggest that we need this amendment. I know the parliamentary secretary suggested that the minister must make an annual report anyway, and I agree with that fact, but the annual report, with all respect, is a booklet that documents the activities of the last year and is tabled in the House of Commons. What I would be looking for, since we are now moving the program into regulations, is the ability to go beyond what happened in the last year to an update of what is happening and more importantly, what are the needs of the coming year, in terms of the demands on the system.

I would also be looking for the direction of the thinking of the bureaucrats and the minister, so that the standing committee, made up of members of Parliament from all sides of the House, could offer some regular advice. That will not be happening because of what an annual report does. We want to know what may be occurring in the next 12 months. I think that is a very important distinction between ensuring that this comes to the standing committee, as opposed to simply the traditional annual report, which is contained in a very nice booklet and tabled in the House of Commons.

I will be moving that amendment and I would seek the approval of my colleagues on the other side and my colleagues in the New Democratic Party. I also indicated to the minister yesterday that I would be moving that amendment. At first blush she suggested she would be able to consider that, hopefully with success, and I look forward to hearing from the parliamentary secretary.

The final point that I would like to address in this debate is the situation as it pertains to potential refugees and family-class members and applicants. We are talking about transportation loans that, at the end of the day, are there to allow families to re-unify. That is the *raison d'être* of the transportation loans. What I would like to draw to the attention of the government is that while we

may be increasing the transportation loans, we should also be looking at the other side of the problem, namely, that decisions being made on refugee applicants or landed immigrants or family-class immigrants, are not being made quickly enough. We have a refugee backlog of some 125,000 people. We have a new determination system for refugees that is also experiencing a new backlog of some 20,000 to 30,000 people.

As well, what we are suggesting is this. It is fine and welcomed that we are increasing the loans to meet the demand, but there are people who have been waiting four, five and six years who have yet to be determined on their cases, let alone request a loan to have their families join them. That is the real essence of the problem. We have a refugee backlog that has to be cleaned up.

We, as Liberals, on this side of the House suggested an administrative review that would give the benefit of the doubt to those individuals who have met certain immigration criteria, such as having family in Canada, having a job in Canada, having one of the two official languages, having children born in this country who are indeed Canadians by birth, and showing that they have integrated into Canadian society.

Barring any security or health risks, we have advocated for years that the government accept those people into this country as a way of trying to give the new system an opportunity to survive. This way the system would not be crushed by the weight of this huge refugee backlog, which is the real core of the problem.

In terms of family reunification, these individuals are not getting a decision. They are not getting a determination, and therefore their families are abroad. Not only are they not united, but when we talk about refugee cases, the families abroad are in danger. Why? If you are a legitimate refugee in Canada and have been making statements on the record against a regime or against a particular group in another part of the world, obviously that is a source of embarrassment for that regime or for that government.

If it is a source of embarrassment, that government can, has and will put pressure, torture or use some other means that are not palatable, at least to our society, on those family members. Therefore, it is not only a case of not being reunited. It is a case that those families may be in real danger.