

Government Orders

But to say that the process has become very politicized—I do not think that is part of our culture. I do not think that in this country, we necessarily make political decisions on who will or will not be allowed into the country. We have certain procedures, we have a well established public service and programs to promote immigration by investors. People cannot say Canada is not a host country, is not a country where you can have a good life. If we only admit 300,000 annually, I am convinced—

An hon. member: Two hundred thousand.

Mr. Gagnon: It does not really matter, but I would like to know how many applications we get from all the Canadian consulates or embassies throughout the world.

Mrs. Gagnon: Madam Speaker, I would like to make a brief comment because this is not really a question. I agree with the member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine when he says that crime has not increased; on the contrary, as I mentioned in my text, it decreased by 5 per cent in 1993, and we are very happy about that.

However, I would like to go back to the comment made by my colleague for Bourassa, who says that we should have been more efficient in this bill and provided corrective action of an administrative nature. It is inconceivable that all the services should have been concentrated in Végreville.

In my riding, people are demanding services. They have expectations. They complain about public services that are very impersonal and becoming more and more inhuman, especially for an immigrant or someone who wants to come to Canada. It seems to me that the relationship that should exist between the people from the host country and those who want to come here has been removed.

• (1605)

I think that this contact has been removed and I too would have liked to see some corrective action in the bill. I will not go back to all the clauses in the bill, but I believe that some of them are contrary to the principle of equity and fairness towards the immigrant population and permanent residents. I think that leaving in the bill the concept of discredit, that is that immigrants are more criminals than native born Quebecers and Canadians is to harm these cultural communities that have chosen to live in Canada.

My colleague for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine said that Canada and Quebec are indeed societies that welcome immigrants and are in favour of immigration, but this bill, in my opinion, will contribute instead to an increase of racism towards these cultural communities. We read in the newspapers that a black or a Haitian has committed a crime, but when it comes to a

Quebecer or a Canadian, they just say an individual. We should be extremely careful on this issue and I will not repeat my speech, but I think that many clauses in the bill are not flexible and compassionate enough, and I will conclude my remarks on that.

[English]

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak once again in support of Bill C-44. I believe the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration clearly highlighted the bill's intention and the changes proposed as a result of the amendments that were passed by the committee.

As I have said in the past, Bill C-44 will provide us with the tools to deal effectively with people who abuse the system. Moreover it is part of the government's strategy to introduce an immigration plan that is fair, sustainable and responds to the needs of Canadians.

The minister of immigration said last August: "A good immigration policy is one that ensures the balance between equity and tolerance on the one hand and law enforcement on the other hand". Unlike members of the opposition, we have listened and continue to listen to what Canadians and Quebecers want in their immigration policy.

The legislation is long overdue. The bill we are dealing with today is necessary if we are to restore integrity to a system that has been damaged by the infiltration of a small but destructive criminal element.

My experience has shown me that for the most part immigrants who come to Canada wish to become full members of Canadian society. Canada is a great and generous country as all of us in the Chamber agree. Our doors have always been open to people fleeing economic hardship, persecution, war, civil strife, and to people who seek a better future for their children and themselves.

Immigrants, people like my parents, became Canadian citizens and participated actively in all segments of our society. Canada's history is full of such stories. The Chamber is full of stories of immigrants who through hard work and perseverance have made the country what it is today: one of the best countries in the world in which to live.

[Translation]

Canadians will not tolerate those who take advantage of their generosity, violate their laws or try to use the immigration and refugee determination process for criminal purposes. They must know that the government will not tolerate abuse. With Bill C-44, the government has taken all necessary measures to prevent abuse and protect the Canadian public against criminals.