

travel to Canada, and subsequently to their points of destination.

The positive element is that this legislation assists those who Canada has accepted, has allowed to come to Canada and has facilitated their reunification with family members coming from various parts of the globe. It helps those who perhaps do not have the financial means. By accepting a convention refugee, it helps the person who might be coming to this country with very little in his or her pocket.

Through the availability of these funds, a individual can obtain a loan from the Government of Canada to bring in his or her family and then repay the loan to the government's treasury. You have a win and win situation. There is the new landed immigrant having the ability to live his or her life with the family and therefore probably become and be a more successfully producing Canadian citizen. That is where the country wins. As well, the loans are ensured.

In 1986—some facts for Canadians watching this debate—after passage of the Immigration Act regarding the transportation loans, the funding was set and capped at \$90 million. It has remained at that figure ever since. By September 1989, some 56,000 outstanding loans amounted to some \$78 million. For the fiscal year 1988-89, 12,000 loans were made totalling \$23 million.

In this bill—I concur with the general parameters of the bill—the loans would move from \$90 million as stated in section 119(3) to \$150 million, which is obviously a recognition of increased immigration and the demand for these kinds of loans.

The other aspect of this bill is that the minister would have greater flexibility to increase the levels, depending on the demand and without seeking amendments through Parliament. It would have the force of giving the ability to act to be set in regulations, rather than in amendments to the legislation.

I have another point I would like to make. I am hoping, because of greater flexibility through regulations and having a desire to increase the loans, the government will improve those programs. I am hoping that this kind of mindset will be applied to other programs and activities within the immigration program. We have seen cut-backs in the budget recently affecting many aspects of government life.

Government Orders

One hopes and one takes as positive that, if the government is willing to increase these loans, it might prove to be a signal that other services and programs within immigration, such as immigration settlement and integration programs will also see some additions in financial resources. Other services that could benefit are the adoption services, language training and skills training.

One matter which concerns me that I wish to discuss in the House today is that there is no stated minimum, that is, there is no minimum below which these loans will go. I suppose it may be difficult to put a low cap on them, but since the minister has the power to go through the regulations, maybe we would see the current level of funding maintained, if not increased, as opposed to going below a certain threshold. That would put difficulty on them.

• (1140)

The reason I raise this concern is because there was an article on May 11 in *The Toronto Star* where a spokesperson for the immigration department, speaking on behalf of the government I would assume, suggested that the government might have to restrict interest free transportation loans to refugees. He also stated that the government had decided to cut off loans to refugees sponsored by private organizations when in fact those government sponsors would not be affected. The spokesperson was a gentleman by the name of Mr. Gerry Maffree.

I am hoping that the concerns of May 11, 1990 gave rise to increasing the loans but that they would not indicate a desire that once the regulations are in the hands of the minister and her officials, that the loans are going to be refused and therefore make it more difficult for those individuals to be reunited with their families.

The second element that concerns me, and I think the parliamentary secretary alluded to it in part, is the fact that we are removing from Parliament or the legislation stream or from amendments of our legislation, and putting into the hands of the minister through regulations, the fact that she can determine what those loans will be. I believe there should be some accountability to Parliament, even though we are putting it into the regulations. There should be some pipeline for debate and discussion between the minister, her officials and members of Parliament.