

Minister of Immigration on Bill C-86

Extracts from an Address by the Honourable Bernard Valcourt, Minister of Employment and Immigration in the House of Commons during the Second Reading of Bill C-86 on June 19, 1992

The changes we have proposed [to the immigration program] involve improvements in three general areas....

Effective Selection

I have proposed the introduction of three management streams for selecting immigrants.

Stream One will have no fixed limit on applications for its various categories. The stream could include, for example, spouses and dependent children, Convention refugees and immigrant investors.... Our objective will be to process routine immediate family applicants within six months regardless of whether the application is made in Germany or India.

Stream Two will operate on a "first come, first served" basis. There will be ceilings for applications from each group within this stream. Parents and grandparents, refugees processed abroad and immigrants with arranged employment could be included in Stream Two.

In the third stream, we will select ...only the most highly qualified individuals ... from the independent or entrepreneurs categories or people qualified in designated occupations.

Again, there will be a ceiling for each group within the stream. Only the allotted number of applications will be accepted.... To encourage a better distribution of this pool of talent, some skilled immigrants will be offered a "contract-like" arrangement. As a condition of their acceptance to Canada, they will be required to settle in a community where the number of people having their specific skills would otherwise be insufficient to meet the needs of that region. They would be required to live in the community for a limited period of time.

Individuals who choose to participate in this program will be doing so, fully aware that their application has

earned additional consideration as a consequence of their willingness to settle in a designated location. There is nothing coercive about this measure....

Overseas we will provide further training and technological assistance to our own staff and to airline personnel to help them identify fraudulent documents and intercept illegal migrants before they reach Canada.... At our borders, we will give immigration staff the authority to search individuals and to seize documents and vehicles used in smuggling people into Canada.

We will also expand the department's authority to use fingerprints and photographs to establish the identity of people seeking admission to Canada. These procedures will be extended to cover all individuals who make refugee claims....

Streamlining the Refugee Process

We will eliminate the first-level hearing [of the Immigration and Refugee Board]....

New procedures will allow Convention refugees to be landed more quickly and take up employment sooner. The proposals will permit the spouse and dependent children of the applicant to be processed at the same time as the claimant....

We have also proposed a series of additional measures.... For example, ... senior immigration officers will be given the authority to decide whether an individual is eligible to claim refugee status.

The management and resolution of refugee issues requires international cooperation.... We are currently negotiating ... an agreement with the United States ... in order to better share the responsibilities between our two countries in the determining of refugee status. We are also talking to the Europeans. ■

Press Release
June 16, 1992

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. The Branch Office in Canada of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has been consulted about the changes envisaged to the immigration legislation, and particularly about the changes to the existing refugee determination system. Since the legislative changes are aimed at making the existing refugee determination procedure in Canada more efficient and the changes continue to abide by the international standards of asylum law, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) supports the "fine tuning" of the legislation, insofar as it concerns asylum seekers in Canada.
2. UNHCR has always advocated that each country should have a fair and expeditious refugee determination system that, in turn, reduces human suffering caused by delays in decisions taken with respect to asylum seekers. It is in line with this that the Branch Office has involved itself in the exercise of reviewing/evaluating the changes that will affect the present refugee determination system. We expect that the new legislation will continue to work in the best interest of all those asylum seekers needing protection.
3. The Representative in Canada of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees supports the changes proposed and will readily answer any questions that may arise, related to UNHCR's perspective on the changes to the immigration legislation. ■