

C-4 Parliamentary Tracker

Friday, September 30, 2011

Full text of Hansard:

<http://parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=41&Ses=1&DocId=5144990>

Status of C-4

Bill C-4 received one hour of debate in the House of Commons, and will next be debated the afternoon of Monday, October 3. The government is seeking to push this bill through to the Public Safety Committee as soon as possible, ideally before the Thanksgiving break week which begins October 10. If they do not manage to wrap up debate by then, the vote to send it to Committee will almost definitely be held in the week of October 17. In the case of this bill, debate will finish when no more MPs rise to give speeches (NB: each MP may only rise once in the course of debate on a given bill). It is worth noting that Tuesday, October 4 is an opposition day, meaning this bill will not be debated on that day. However, it is likely that we see it debated during Government Orders on every other day this week.

Synopsis of Debate

Speeches were heard from **Marie-Claude Morin** (NDP, member of Standing Committee of Public Safety), **José Nunez-Melo** (NDP), **Philip Toone** (NDP), and **Kirsty Duncan** (Liberal). Many of the key messages already brought forth by my NDP and Liberal MPs thus far were reiterated, with a great deal of agreement and support expressed between the two parties during the question and answer portion of debate. Notably, opposition members referenced statements and positions from advocacy and non-governmental groups including the Canada Council for Refugees, Amnesty International Canada, The Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Bar Association and the Centre for Refugee Studies. On three occasions, Conservative MPs – **Costas Menegakis**, **James Lunney**, and **Paul Calandra** (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage) – rose during the question and answer period to defend the bill and pose questions. Statements from these conservative MPs focused on security of borders and communities, sovereignty, and fairness in the immigration and refugee system.

Debate Highlights

James Lunney (CPC)

- *In Q&A*: “Refugees are not refugees because a smuggler says they are. We have the ability to determine genuine refugee status in this country. This bill would crack down on the smugglers. It would actually bring some accountability and increase our ability to prosecute smugglers, mandatory minimum prison sentences for convicted smugglers, and it would hold the shipowners to account. It would provide for a maximum of one year of detention, so that legitimate refugee status could be determined by our very generous provisions in our country.”

Marie-Claude Morin (NDP, Member of Standing Committee of Public Safety)

- “[...] in Australia, similar laws met with opposition from **Amnesty International**, which started a campaign to condemn the misinformation surrounding refugees who arrive by boat. [...] We have a responsibility towards refugees. We do not have the right to treat them this way.”

- “We are losing our values of openness, tolerance, giving, social justice and equality. Many groups strongly oppose this bill. The **Canadian Council for Refugees** completely rejects this bill. **Amnesty International Canada** said the bill would lead to serious violations of the rights of refugees. The **Canadian Civil Liberties Association** says these measures are simply not necessary. Why would we apply measures that are not necessary? The **Canadian Bar Association** says that this bill violates Canada's international obligations regarding the treatment of persons seeking protection.”
- “A group of experts from the **Centre for Refugee Studies** has described this bill as draconian. I think these groups know what they are talking about.”

Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.)

- *In response to question from Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage), which asked: “would the hon. member agree that one of the prime responsibilities of any government is to ensure that its borders are protected and when its sovereignty is challenged, that its various agencies have the ability to protect its sovereignty?”*, *Duncan replied*, “Mr. Speaker, I would point out that our sovereignty is not under attack. It is important for people to understand that refugees are often classified unfairly.”
- “It is important for people to understand that the bill has been harshly criticized because of what it would do to refugees. Refugee advocates denounce the bill as an attack on refugee rights. [...] **Janet Dench, the executive director of the Canadian Council for Refugees**, says: ‘It is difficult to understand why the government would be proposing to bring this legislation back without change when it has been so widely condemned by legal experts, is clearly a violation of our charter and clearly in violation of international standards of human rights. There is no ambiguity about this. It does not conform to our international legal obligations.’”

Philip Toone (NDP)

- “The **Canadian Civil Liberties Association** wrote to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism to express its concerns about this bill. The **president of the Canadian Council for Refugees, Wanda Yamamoto**, has said, ‘We are celebrating this year the 60th anniversary of the refugee convention, but instead of honouring this treaty, the government is proposing to violate it.’ She went on to say, ‘Let us not forget that the convention was adopted because many countries, including Canada, had closed their doors on Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis, and we said ‘Never again!’”