

Tilson wants transparent immigration plan

Written By SCOTT TAYLOR

David Tilson, the Conservative MP for Dufferin-Caledon, measures his words carefully, but pointedly. A plan is needed for the flood of immigrants streaming into Canada illegally, mostly through the Roxham Road crossing in Quebec.

That plan, he insists, should look nothing like what's going on in the United States, where children are being taken from their families. But with refugees living in school dormitories and tents, the governing federal Liberals have to come up with something more than the status quo.

That's why an emergency meeting was called this past Monday (July 16) with members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in Ottawa to discuss the situation with respect to illegal border crossing at Canada's border with the United States.

Mr. Tilson shared what was said at that meeting and what things might look like going forward.

"The opposition, of course, states that there's a serious problem and the government doesn't have a plan to solve this issue of illegal asylum seekers," he said. "The government fought us on that. They say there is a plan, although, quite frankly, they didn't say what the plan was."

The discussion then quickly devolved into a question of semantics, Mr. Tilson said.

"(Conservatives) are using the word that these people are coming into Canada illegally and they're saying, oh no, it's not illegal, it's irregular. We got into debates such as that. It hemmed and hawed for quite a while and then finally there was a motion to agree that there would be up to two meetings that would have to be held between now and Aug. 3."

The plan is for there to be opening statements by Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen, the minister of public safety Ralph Goodale, and Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Jean-Yves Duclos. Then each one would be questioned on the issue by all members of the committee.

"The Liberals would have a hard time turning this down because in total there has been 31,377 illegal immigrants seeking asylum have been coming at this border crossing in Quebec. Not all, but most of them have come to this area. There have been more than 11,000 this year alone."

Mr. Tilson said the word the Liberals are using to describe the refugees "irregulars, rather than illegals" is being used to "water down" what they really are.

"There's a sign at the border crossing of this Roxham Road, if I can quote it. It says, 'Stop. It is illegal to cross the border here or any place other than a port of entry. You will be arrested and detained if you cross here.'"

He said the government has decided on the word irregular "because it doesn't sound so bad, I expect from their perspective, but as far as the opposition is concerned, they're crossing illegally. There's no question they're crossing illegally."

Mr. Tilson said the problem is going to become more troublesome quickly because the dormitories many refugees are living in will soon be needed for students.

"They're going to have to clear those dormitories out so students can move in. Many are living in homeless shelters, which are normally used by the homeless. Well, I don't know where the homeless are going, I guess the streets."

Asked what the Conservative would be, however, he replied that his party is not the government.

?All we know is there are those people waiting in refugee camps and facing dangerous persecution all over the planet and they've got to wait longer as more and more resources are being spent on processing these people who are crossing into Canada from the United States. it's disrupting.?

As for the controversial measures being taken south of the border under the Donald Trump presidency, Mr. Tilson didn't mince words.

?I think it's terrible splitting children from their families. That's just awful. Don't treat the Conservative position like we're agreeing with what President Trump is doing. It's quite the opposite. We cannot agree with what President is doing. He's trying to ship people back to their countries and that's exactly why they're trying to cross the border because they know that if they're not careful President Trump will send them back to their countries.?

Mr. Tilson said he hopes to be in attendance at the next meetings and hopes the Liberal ministers unveil a clear plan of how to deal with the ongoing crisis.