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# **Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Raymonde Folco**

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## Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Thursday, March 10, 2005

•(1105)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.)):** Today, Thursday March 10, 2005 is the 23rd meeting of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Colleagues, today we are reviewing the certificate of appointment of Mr. Philippe Rabot as Commissioner of the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security Review Tribunals. You will recall that we decided to review as a committee a number of appointments. Mr. Philippe Rabot, Chair of the RCMP External Review Committee, has therefore been invited to appear as today's sole witness to answer your questions.

Welcome to our committee., Mr. Rabot. Perhaps it would be a good idea for you to begin with your presentation, following which committee members can ask you some questions or make some comments. You have the floor, sir.

**Mr. Philippe Rabot (Chair, Royal Canadian Mounted Police External Review Committee, As an Individual):** Thank you, Madam Chair. I won't take any more than two or three minutes.

I want to start by thanking you for dealing with this matter so promptly. I'm delighted to be here today. I think it's an excellent idea to have parliamentary committees review appointments to administrative tribunals. Moreover, I wish to point out that this is my second appearance before a parliamentary committee to discuss a proposed appointment to an administrative tribunal. Twelve years ago, in fact, when I was appointed Deputy Chair of the Ontario Assessment Review Board, I was called before a committee to answer questions from Ontario MLAs about my nomination.

[*English*]

I also wanted to talk about what I regard as important points to appreciate about the review tribunals.

The bulk of the work that review tribunals do, as you're probably aware, pertains to disability pensions. Of the 4,000 to 5,000 cases per year, 95% deal with that particular issue.

All of the members on the tribunals are part-time members. There are close to 300 in every province across the country. Panels that sit at hearings on disability pensions consist of a lawyer who chairs, a physician, and a member from another profession. There are also staff in Vanier of approximately 80 people, with a budget of

approximately \$12 million that is funded through the pension fund and not through CRF.

I think that an important aspect of the work the commissioner has to do is to make sure that members and staff work well together, pursue the same objectives, and share a common set of values.

That completes my statement.

With that, Madam Chair, I'm now ready to answer questions.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Forseth, we are on the first round of seven minutes.

**Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam, CPC):** Thank you. I may split my time with my colleagues.

In your consideration of this appointment, obviously people asked that you be appointed, or perhaps you were a bit of a salesman for yourself because you're eager to fulfill the job. Do you have any plans for reshaping the current practice and the kind of service delivery? Could you outline some of the result objectives that you can bring to this position that are going to change or improve results for individuals coming before you? I'm looking at the end result for the consumer or whatever, rather than administrative needs, supervisory needs, or internal system needs. I'm looking at what you envision to improve results for clients.

•(1110)

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Thank you.

Madam Chair, on tribunals such as this one, the issue of service delivery to the clients is a constant one, particularly because you have members changing all the time. It can be anywhere from 50 to 100 new members coming in all the time. Training becomes critical, and in terms of looking at ways of constantly improving service delivery, I think the role of a commissioner in particular is to look at the way the training is being done—not just at the outset, but throughout the course of the terms of the members.

I think it's very important for the commissioner to be in tune with what the concerns are with respect to what's going on at hearings. This was an issue in a lot of the tribunals—in my particular experience, when I was vice-chair of the Assessment Review Board of Ontario, which had 70 to 80 members, all part-time. It is a constant exercise in vigilance, being attuned to what their concerns are, what the complaints are, but it is also being proactive—not waiting for the phone to ring with the complaint, but going out to hearings and watching what's going on.

I firmly believe we have to work hard at feedback to members on their performance, good and bad, because unfortunately sometimes on these tribunals we only get feedback when we get complaints. It has to be an ongoing, constant exercise in making sure the clients who come out of hearings feel, first and foremost, they've been treated with fairness and they've been treated with dignity.

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** Further to that, you may understand that local community MPs' offices are often seen as the ombudsman of last resort. Do you envision perhaps looking at that feedback loop as well?

Often we get the disgruntled client, the client who brings their whole life in a cardboard box full of files, and they are totally out of social order, and they have appeals everywhere. They are very difficult people to deal with. And then they come to the MP. They're going to stick on our door until...maybe forever. But that is another aspect of the feedback loop you talked about. Have you thought about anything in that regard, about making connections with community offices? We do have staff who listen very patiently to some of these individuals. Do you see any possibilities in that regard?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Absolutely, Madam Chair. In fact, when I was at the Assessment Review Board, I spent a lot of my time talking to MPPs, their staff, and municipal councillors. That's an important constituency, because you will get honest and clear feedback. Again, you have to be proactive in that regard, especially early on in the mandate. To be out there talking to community groups, talking to people in the department, talking to MPs' offices, and listening to the feedback is an excellent way to then chart a course for improved service delivery. I firmly believe that.

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** I'm going to defer to Mr. Komarnicki.

**The Chair:** Mr. Komarnicki—I am going to spend all of next week rehearsing that.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** I have a couple of preliminary questions.

I certainly was impressed with your expertise and background. That certainly qualifies you for this position.

One question I had is whether you first became aware of this particular position through the *Canada Gazette*, or were you aware of its creation prior to its advertisement in the *Gazette*?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** This is going to sound strange, but I am an avid reader of part 1 of the *Canada Gazette*.—no, not just for myself; as secretary of the Council of Canadian Administrative Tribunals, I look at it so that if I see jobs some of my colleagues are interested in, I send it to them. I think it's important that people be aware of this. It's also how I got my current position with the RCMP

External Review Committee, by reading an ad in the *Canada Gazette*.

•(1115)

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Only a certain segment of the population actually reads the *Gazette*. You're certainly upward mobile.

What was the main thing that prompted you to this position, outside of dollar considerations? What single thing most intrigued you about this particular position?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** I saw this position as a natural progression in terms of my career: 22 years within the administrative tribunal community. I see it as very challenging, and I saw it as something on which I could make a significant contribution.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Is that all? Thank you.

[English]

We'll go on to Madame Gagnon, s'il vous plaît.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** I will give my time to our party critic.

**The Chair:** Welcome, Mr. Gagnon. You have the floor.

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Rabot, it is a pleasure to meet you this morning. On perusing your curriculum vitae and noting the positions that you have held in the past, it is clear that you have the necessary experience for this job. In the past, you've worked primarily on the material side of things, if you will. You mentioned your work with the Ontario Assessment Review Board.

Do you have any special people skills? In this position, you will probably be dealing with extremely vulnerable individuals. I personally worked on issues related to the Guaranteed Income Supplement and had occasion to see that some people are the truly forgotten members of society. It's almost like we need to be the ones to reach out to them, because they don't even realize that society has forgotten about them. Are you drawn by this aspect of your work?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Absolutely. In the field of property assessment, we deal with people who are facing relatively dramatic situations, although they may not necessarily be vulnerable. Property taxes were rising sharply in Ontario at the time of my involvement with the Board. In my current position with the RCMP where I handle grievances, one of the most important things I deal with is medical referrals. Some RCMP members have been injured on the job and face the prospect of losing their job because the RCMP has decided that it doesn't have any more work for them. These situations can be quite dramatic. In the course of my work, I also handle many complaints of harassment. There's no need for me to tell you how dramatic such situations can be as well. Often, the complainants are on sick leave by the time their file crosses my desk. I have been dealing with questions of this nature for many years. The job requires sensitivity and diplomacy and an appreciation of the vulnerable state of the people with whom we come into contact. You also need to have a tremendous amount of patience.

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** When a recipient of the GIS wants to have a decision reviewed or obtain benefits retroactively, he must go through a lengthy series of steps. I understand the office that you will be heading up has been without a commissioner for the past year. Do you have plans to pick of the pace in order to begin reviewing appeals as quickly as possible?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Yes indeed. You're correct to point out that the Commissioner passed away suddenly a little over a year ago. Deputy Commissioner Guy Arseneault has been filling in since then. He has been Deputy Commissioner since 2002 so it's not as if there's been a void of any kind. He's doing an excellent job, in my view, and he will be continuing to serve in this capacity for some time yet.

You talked about our picking up the pace. I've observed that it generally takes seven or eight months for an appeal to come before a review tribunal. That's seems like a long time to me and it must certainly seem like a long time to benefit recipients. I don't know if there is room for improvement in this area, but I certainly intend to look at this whole question more closely at the earliest opportunity.

• (1120)

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** You decided of your own free will to apply for this position. You stated that you have worked on the human resources side of things, whether at the RCMP or in the field of property assessment. Are you merely looking for a new challenge, or are you drawn by this aspect of your work?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** I am very drawn to the idea of applying laws and regulations in a fair and equitable manner. I am interested in a position that will allow me to advise tribunal members. As Deputy Chair of the Ontario Assessment Review Board, I spent a fair amount of time getting feedback from those who had their appeals heard by the Board. Occasionally, they recounted how they had been treated. I believe there is nothing so important as listening to their concerns. Administrative tribunals were created precisely to bring people closer to the process, otherwise everything would be left in the hands of the courts. I feel that it is important to bring the administrative justice process closer to the people.

**The Chair:** You still have several seconds left, Mr. Gagnon.

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Mention was made of a seven or eight month waiting period that you are looking to shorten. What is considered to be a normal waiting period in the case of an office like yours, given the vulnerable state of your clients?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** It's difficult for me to answer that question because I first need to know the reasons for the processing delays. I don't know if members are hearing from their constituents that they would like to see things move more quickly. I need to know more about the reasons for any delays.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Gagnon.

Mr. Martin.

[English]

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Thanks for coming this morning.

I'm just wondering, are you or have you ever been a member of a political party?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Not since I was in university.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** And then...?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** I was a member of a political party.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Can I ask you which political party it was?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** For a couple of years, in the late seventies and early eighties, I was a member of the Quebec Liberal Party and the federal Liberal Party.

• (1125)

**Mr. Tony Martin:** On this new position, I note from research that was prepared that the level of salary of the position you're in now is \$121,300 to \$142,700. How does the salary in this new position compare?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** This position is at the next level of classification.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** So it's up?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** That's correct.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Okay.

What did you do before you started in the business of panels and working for government in this manner? I believe you started in Ontario and then moved to the federal level.

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** After law school, I became an adjudicator with the Public Service Commission of Canada, hearing appeals of job competitions. I became assistant director general of that branch in the late 1980s. Then I was secretary of the Copyright Board of Canada. That was a management position I held for some three to four years. I dealt with issues of copyright fees for various users, particularly with respect to music. From there, I went to the Assessment Review Board in 1993.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** So this could be seen as a career track for you.

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** It could be seen that way.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** I'm not sure if I'm wrong in this, but it seems to me these boards and commissions are supposed to provide a civilian oversight approach to make sure people are being dealt with fairly where government is concerned. Is there any inconsistency in appointing somebody who is obviously on a professional career track, as opposed to—these are two- to five-year appointments—from time to time going out into the public pool of people out there who might be interested in participating in this way, to make sure these oversight types of government operations are above board, non-partisan, and not aligned in any way?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Thank you.

I want to emphasize that in this position I don't hear the cases; that's for the members. This position is essentially a management position, so I would argue that it's very important that you have in this position someone with significant experience at the management level and with very good familiarity with government policy and rules. I'm intimately familiar with all the rules. Being head of an agency, which I am now, has given me an opportunity to familiarize myself with all the rules established by central agencies, and I think that is an important qualification for someone to be head of the tribunal.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** I just want to talk a little bit about the actual work itself, and I'm not sure if you can answer this or not, or maybe it's the same issue.

As Mr. Forseth mentioned, we become the office of last resort for lots of people on lots of issues. In terms of pensions, there's the issue of people who don't apply for something they're qualified for and then finally somehow find out about it. They come in and apply and find out that yes, they qualify, but it's only retroactive for, say, one year, yet they've qualified for 10 or 15 years. That money really belongs to them because they paid into all of these funds as they worked through their career, but now they can't access what is rightfully theirs.

I'll give you an instance. People who qualify for the GIS or the OAS come in and find out they qualify. I've recently run into a incident where a woman whose husband died continued to live on his pension, not realizing that at a certain age she actually qualified for a pension herself and would have had significantly more income to look after herself. She lived in relative poverty. She has passed away now, and it was only in tying up her estate that the family discovered this. They went back to see if there was any recourse for them to cover the costs in making sure this woman at least passed on in some dignity. In fact, even though she qualified, because she didn't apply, they now can get a year retroactively, but beyond that, nothing.

What's your position on, number one, that whole question of the government's responsibility to let people know this is something they're qualified for and entitled to, and number two, the whole question of retroactivity?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** That's an interesting issue, Madam Chair. In fact, the review tribunals had a survey done by Environics a couple of years ago on the very question of why people aren't applying for disability benefits, and lack of information was an issue. There definitely is a responsibility on the part of government to ensure people are aware of the remedies that are available. It shouldn't be something that's hidden and that we hope people aren't going to find out about. I think there is, from my understanding, some effort and more of an effort than had been made in previous years to make sure that is done.

The review tribunals may have a role in that as well. They have an excellent website, and I think the commissioner of review tribunals should spend some time to go out and speak to various outreach groups and community groups. Certainly, Mr. Martin, if you'd like me to come up to Sault Ste. Marie, I always enjoy going there and I'll gladly accept invitations.

• (1130)

**Mr. Tony Martin:** What about the retroactivity piece?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Well, that flows from legislation. It's always an issue of every tribunal I've been on: time limits and retroactivity. Certainly, I'll be looking at that and determining whether I wish to make any recommendations to the minister in that regard.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Adams.

**Hon. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

Monsieur Rabot, you described the tribunals and you mentioned the citizen member and the lawyer member, and then you said the third person was a physician. I thought the third person was a health care professional, not necessarily a physician. Am I wrong?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** It's my understanding it has to be a medical practitioner. I could be wrong, but I don't think we have nurses on these panels.

**Hon. Peter Adams:** I suspect we do, and when I heard about it, I thought it was a good thing. It's not, by the way, that I don't understand why there should be a strong physician involvement, but I do actually think it strengthens the tribunal that the medical professionals include nurses. I'm fairly sure you'll find there are one or two, but I'm not being picky on this thing. I only mention it because I thought of it as a positive thing for the tribunals, and you might want to store that away in your mind.

Does it give you any concern that there's been no one doing this job for a year? There must be some catching up to do. Do you have any sense of where it's at and what sort of pile of work awaits you?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Somebody has been doing this job for the last year, a former member of this House, Guy Arseneault, who is the deputy commissioner. He's been there since 2002. I met with him last week, and he's a great guy.

Maybe I'm kidding myself in thinking this is going to be a seamless transition, but I really get a sense that things over the last year....

Mr. Smith, the former commissioner, died in very tragic circumstances, and I think that was a shock to the organization. But in terms of how it's been functioning for the last year, I don't anticipate, because of the extraordinary work Mr. Arseneault has been doing—and he's going to be there—that there will be much of an impediment.

**Hon. Peter Adams:** Thank you for that.

I think you said you were the secretary of the Council of Canadian Administrative Tribunals. As I understand it, what that does is look at tribunals, and you're going to become the head of a tribunal. In that group, have you ever looked at this particular tribunal? Have you ever done an inquiry into it or a study of it? Have you ever given thought to doing such a study in your capacity as secretary?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** I'm also the chair of the legislation and public policy committee of the Council of Canadian Administrative Tribunals. What we do is, rather than look at specific tribunals, try to provide support to tribunals. For instance, we have our annual conference every year.

One of the initiatives we're now working on is a distance learning program for tribunal members. That's going to be particularly useful, I would think, for tribunals such as this one, which have part-time members all across the country. This distance learning program will be web enabled, and we're quite enthusiastic about providing that training because there's a real need for it right across the country, especially in the provinces and in the territories but even in federal tribunals such as this one.

**Hon. Peter Adams:** That's very interesting.

So your group doesn't do studies. It doesn't do inquiries into tribunals. It's the Council of Canadian Administrative Tribunals. You don't look at your members? You don't study them to see if they have problems, or do they bring problems to you?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** We don't have an audit function. We're an association where members of tribunals can join and we invite them to our annual conferences. When we have our annual conference, such as the next one in June—thank you for giving me the opportunity to plug it—we bring tribunal members around the table and have them discuss things. You'd be amazed at the number of issues of common concern, such as some of the issues that were raised earlier today. That's what we do.

• (1135)

**Hon. Peter Adams:** I wonder if I could transfer it to Mr. D'Amours now, and he could begin. He would like a turn, I think, on the next round.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. D'Amours.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

I do like what I'm hearing, Mr. Rabot. I'd like to get your opinion of something, namely the whole issue of respect for official languages in the case of francophones.

I hail from New Brunswick. You mentioned that in some instances, waiting times stretched to seven or eight months. However, it's possible that the delays could be even longer for unilingual francophones because the tribunal does not have enough francophones on staff.

I'd like you to comment on this state of affairs. Do you think more should be done to ensure the regular presence of francophones on the tribunals?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** If what you're describing is true, then it's unacceptable, in my opinion, to inform people that they must wait a little longer in order to plead their case in French before the tribunal.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** So then, if a situation like this was to arise, you would deal with it.

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Yes. As a matter of fact, when I was the Deputy Chair of the Ontario Assessment Review Board, I paid particular attention to this matter. Situations like this arise frequently in Ontario. I won't accept any delays occurring for this reason.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Forseth.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** Thank you.

I was very pleased and encouraged to hear about your commitment to training and ongoing staff development. Historically in government organizations there's always a great gap between the plans for and commitment to staff training and the ability to get the funds to deliver that program. It's not only about being able to find the funds for the direct training but often about being able to backfill positions, to perhaps find retired individuals or whoever who will

come back on contract to backfill while your regular members are on ongoing staff development.

It seems that whole regime is fundamental to all of the other good things you plan in order to maintain and improve standards. I'm just wondering if you have some strategies to get the money to be able to deliver on those grand commitments to training and staff development, not only for the training itself but for backfilling.

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Well, this particular organization has a well-developed training program, much better than a lot of tribunals have. Not only do they do training at the outset but they do training down the road, and it's an in-house training program. Because this is a large tribunal, they've had to develop that expertise, so they may be ahead of a lot of other organizations in that regard.

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** I would hope you'd be able to advance the envelope or get the ball down the field or whatever, to use a sports analogy. The ability to really improve the level of service an organization provides is, I think, directly tied to the capacity to train staff very well on an ongoing basis. That's why I believe in professional development.

I'll just ask you another question. Have you ever been on the side of an appellant in helping to prepare an appeal? Do you know what it feels like to be a helper on the appellant's side in going before a tribunal? It may be much like where in criminal courts we have people who, once they become counsel, then immediately become crown prosecutors, and forever they're on that side and never have any experience as defence counsel. I'm just wondering about your sympathies and understanding with respect to being an advocate for an applicant, an appellant, before one of these tribunals.

• (1140)

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Well, Madam Chair, because I have been within the tribunal community since I completed law school, I have not had the opportunity to represent parties before tribunals. What I did, particularly when I was vice-chair of the Assessment Review Board, was take a lot of calls from individuals who would phone and say, look, my hearing is coming up and I don't know what to do and how to prepare, so can you give me some advice? I did a lot of that and it was an important part of my duties to still remain objective while just letting people know they need not be intimidated by the process just because they couldn't afford a lawyer. I did what I could in that capacity and I think it was significant.

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** Well, that's part of the corrective feedback loop, where you collect information and are able to bring it around to the front end again so changes are made. Some organizations collect the information about problems but nothing ever seems to change, because somewhere in that feedback loop the information doesn't get back to the front end so things can be fixed. We see you in your position as the primary individual to ensure that the corrective feedback loops happen and that administratively something happens in response to various complaints or difficulties, which often become very widely known.

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** I share that frustration. In bureaucracies such as this, there are always 10,000 reasons why you can't change something, but they don't outweigh the one good reason why we should. You just have to push and say to people, yes, I know this is going to disrupt the way things are done, but we have to do it, because let's remember what our mission statement is, which is to ensure expert, independent, unbiased, quality service to all parties to the appeal equally, fairly, and with understanding, respect, and dignity. I'm never going to lose sight of that mission statement.

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** Thank you.

Now I'm prepared to defer to the Bloc, but if any of my colleagues have a question....

Ed has one.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** My question is perhaps more directed to the CPP disability area. The qualifying grounds for disability are very narrow. You find that, perhaps through lack of information or education, you have many applicants who are hopeful and are going through the process and continuing the process when they have little or no chance of succeeding on appeal. Have you directed your mind at all toward establishing either some educational information, or a score card if you want to call it that, that the public would be familiar with before they get entangled in the process with many times not much hope in terms of success?

There's certainly a good number.... I'm sure if you looked at your projected successes and failures in appeal, there would be a lot who fail on that ground. I'm not sure if you've studied that or not, but have you directed your mind to it?

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Yes, and this is an issue that a lot of tribunals face, that people's expectation of what the tribunal can do for them differs from what is the case because of the way the law is framed and the criteria are framed.

Certainly, if you were to go to the website of this organization, you would find it has a lot of good information. I think there's an important role to play—as I understand it is being played increasingly—by the staff in terms of when they contact people prior to their hearings, making sure they understand what happens so that people don't show up at the hearing and then all of a sudden have prepared their case in a certain direction and tribunal members say to them, no, we can't look at this because that's what the law says. That's always been a very big concern of mine, and this organization is no different in that regard.

You have to walk a fine line, however, between providing information and appearing to dissuade people from exercising the recourse. That's a fine line, because you don't want people then to say, I wanted to appeal, but the people on the tribunal told me not to.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** The other aspect—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, we're really way over time.

Mr. Gagnon.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Thank you.

I don't have many more questions. Following up on my colleague's question concerning feedback, I would like to comment on the situation of persons who are entitled to benefits, but who have not applied for them because they are unaware of their entitlement. I hope you will work hard on this issue. I had an opportunity to criss-cross Quebec and to take part in 43 separate meetings with the province's senior citizens. I came across some pretty pitiful and surprising cases of persons who had spent their old age living in abject poverty and who were owed substantial sums of money at the time of their death. Their situation is almost inexplicable. Considerable work needs to be done to address this problem.

I'm also wondering if the review tribunal could also go on the road. For example, it could spend either a full day or half-day each year in the Mauricie region, in the Quebec heartland. Could the review tribunal not hold regional hearings, instead of always having people come to Ottawa to plead their case?

• (1145)

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** I may have misunderstood, but I was under the impression that the review tribunals held hearings in communities across the country.

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** You're saying then that these tribunals already travel. I apologize then. In any case, I simply want to remind you as often as I possibly can that much work still needs to be done to reduce the waiting period between the time an appeal is filed and is ultimately heard by the tribunal. I'd like to wish you the best of luck if you are appointed to this position. I wish the committee luck as well, as we'll have an opportunity to work together.

**Mr. Philippe Rabot:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Gagnon.

[*English*]

Mr. Martin, do you have questions?

**Mr. Tony Martin:** I have no further questions.

**The Chair:** Fine. Is there anyone from the Liberal side? No.

Mr. Forseth.

**Mr. Paul Forseth:** Thank you.

I'm quite prepared, at this time, to move that the committee waive further consideration of the nomination of Philippe Rabot for appointment to the position of Commissioner of Canada Pension Plan/Old Age Security Review.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Wonderful. Congratulations, Mr. Rabot. You did a wonderful job.

Colleagues, please do not leave. Please don't go anywhere. We are now going in camera, ladies and gentlemen.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]









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