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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, October 29, 2009**

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**Chair**

**Mr. David Tilson**



## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Thursday, October 29, 2009

• (0900)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

This is meeting number 31 of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. It is Thursday, October 29, 2009. The orders of the day are that pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are undertaking a study of immigration application process wait times.

We have two witnesses today. From the Department of Citizenship and Immigration we have Ms. Claudette Deschênes, assistant deputy minister for operations. I feel as though you are part of the committee now. We also have Ms. Heidi Smith, director of permanent resident policy and programs. Thank you.

We look forward to hearing some preliminary comments, and then I know members of the committee will have some questions for you. Welcome again to the committee.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes (Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We are pleased to be here today, and we would like to thank the committee for inviting us to speak. Today I will update you on improvements that we have made within the past year to program delivery, and I will briefly share some of the challenges we face in processing applications.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the committee for inviting me to speak. Today I will update you on improvements that we have made to program delivery during the past year. And I will briefly share some of the challenges we face in processing applications.

Statistics Canada reports that immigration will account for all labour force growth in Canada within the next 10 years, and all population growth within the next 20 years. Given the importance of economic immigration to our future, we introduced substantial changes last year to the way we process federal skilled worker applications.

I am pleased to report that new federal skilled worker applicants can now expect to receive an initial assessment from CIC within weeks rather than years. We are also working to make decisions within six to twelve months and not six years as was previously the case.

There are a number of reasons for this. One reason is that we are being more efficient. Our Centralized Intake Office in Sydney, Nova

Scotia—created with funding from budget 2008—has allowed us to reduce the administrative burden on our missions abroad.

[English]

However, the bigger reason for our improved processing times is that we changed the rules. Before changes were introduced in February of 2008, we had to process every application to a final decision. If you passed the skilled worker grid and your health and security checks, you were in. Under the new system, which we call our action plan for faster immigration, a set of ministerial instructions identifies eligibility criteria for federal skilled workers, criteria that reflect Canada's current labour market needs.

Now the centralized intake office does an initial assessment of all federal skilled worker applications against those criteria. Applicants are getting an initial idea of their eligibility in 60 days, and if they aren't eligible, they get a refund. If successful at Sydney, they are asked to submit further information to the appropriate mission for possible processing.

Because these applications have been triaged, the mission's efforts are now more focused. Since February 2008, more than 240,000 people have applied to the federal skilled worker program, and as of the end of September 2009 we've processed more than 100,000 applications and issued visas to over 8,000 skilled workers. Many of these people applied before the ministerial instructions were issued in November, so there were nine months when we couldn't process applications because the criteria weren't yet set. It's taking some time to catch up, but as I mentioned, new applicants can expect a decision within six to 12 months.

We are also making substantial progress on the backlog of old federal skilled worker applications that existed before we introduced these changes last February. We must still process all of those applications under the old rules, but I am pleased to report that in the last 18 months we have reduced the number of applicants in that backlog by more than 30%.

• (0905)

**The Chair:** There's a point of order. Excuse me, Ms. Deschênes.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Chair, are we not talking about family class?

**The Chair:** We are talking about wait times.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** That wasn't the agreement. I thought the agreement covered wait times for family class applications.

**The Chair:** Well, I mentioned at the last meeting that we're going to be talking about wait times today. You've got to listen to me, Ms. Chow.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Well, that wasn't clear, because we said family class—

**The Chair:** Give us a moment. To be fair to you, just wait one minute and we'll check.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Okay, thank you.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** You can challenge the witnesses.

**The Chair:** We'll suspend for a minute. Thank you.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Sorry. That's what I was prepared for.

**The Chair:** I don't know what we're going to do if you're right.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Andrew Chaplin):** From the minutes of October 1, the committee agreed that the committee undertake a study of wait times by hearing two panels of witnesses, one on family reunification and another on investors; and on November 3, the committee hear a third panel of witnesses on wait times, then resume in camera to issue drafting instructions to the analysts.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** As I recall, Mr. Chair, that was precisely what we agreed to at both the subcommittee level and at the committee level. That is my understanding, so I prepared all my questions precisely on family wait times and not on the overall picture.

However, we can still proceed because.... In fact, Mr. Chair, when the Library of Parliament prepared the document for us...it's only specifically on wait times for family class and investment class.

**The Chair:** We're going to go back....

One minute, Mr. Karygiannis. Please be patient. I'm going to let the clerk tell you what he's telling me.

• (0910)

**The Clerk:** The way we set up the panels was that we asked the department here to address wait times for both classes. The first panel, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m., was set up for the investor class. The panel for next Tuesday morning is still in the course of being set up for family class, between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** So this morning, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., I would imagine, the discussion from the department would be specifically what we have in front of us—wait times for family class and investor class. But, Mr. Chair, the submission from our assistant deputy minister is not specifically about that. I don't want to cancel or change anything, but can we add one more panel, let's say next week sometime, so that they can perhaps come back and we could spend more time on family class and investor class?

We can continue. I don't want to interrupt for too long, but I was concerned that we wouldn't have enough time to dwell on the family class.

**The Chair:** I suggest that we continue, and that you and Monsieur St-Cyr and Mr. Bevilacqua and Mr. Dykstra can talk about that issue

after the meeting, as to whether we will have something else at another meeting.

We didn't even stop the clock, so who knows where we're going? I don't want to stall this meeting any more. If you don't mind, I'd rather the critics and the parliamentary secretary discuss this after the meeting.

A point of order, Mr. Karygiannis.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Chair, is there a consensus and agreement from the department and yourself that we will invite the departmental officials back to specifically talk about family class dependants, children, and spouses?

**The Chair:** Mr. Karygiannis, doesn't anybody listen to me any more? I just said that the three critics and Mr. Dykstra will discuss this after the meeting and will decide—

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** With all due respect, Chair, may I just finish?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Discussing it and putting it under the rug is one thing.

**The Chair:** I didn't say that.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Let me finish, Chair.

Discussing it and the departmental officials coming back, making a public commitment to come back to really tell the real story, is another thing, because the real story is the waiting times on immigrant children and spouses. So today, although they're here and we thank them, and they were supposed to come in with the real story, they're giving us another story.

The challenge, Mr. Chair, to you is, will they come back? Would you invite them to come back to really talk about what we have as a motion on paper?

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order.

We're going to proceed.

Thank you, and I'm sorry for the interruption. We'll continue on with your presentation.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I will now describe the ways in which we have improved program performance.

In mainland China, we are processing study permit applications faster by giving students the chance to undergo a medical examination before submitting their application at our visa office in Beijing. Despite being implemented late in the peak season, students quickly started taking advantage of this procedure. Accordingly, more than 30% of applications received in August and September 2009 were processed this way.

Applications were processed in 16 days in 80% of the cases, compared to 43 days for regular applications. We anticipate that more than half of student applicants will use this procedure by the next summer peak season intake. Our service improvements are helping to promote Canadian education abroad. Since we launched the Student Partners Program with the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, our visa offices in India have received over 1,500 student applications.

This program has several checks and balances. Applicants are required to provide complete and verifiable documentation, and there is a feedback mechanism allowing colleges to report on whether students show up. In 2008, 80% of applications were processed in six months or less overseas, and in 10 months or less at CPC Vegreville.

Last year, CIC processed more than a million and a half visa applicants. To meet this growing demand on our services, in June 2008, we launched the successful pilot project called e-services, which allows international students in Canada who wish to apply for off-campus work permits to confirm their eligibility and submit their applications on line.

● (0915)

[English]

Since February 2009, students using e-services have been able to extend their study permits online. Soon workers and visitors will also be able to extend their status online. All institutions participating in the off-campus work permit program have been using the electronic notification system to exchange information with CIC regarding student eligibility for work permits.

In April 2008 we introduced a business express program in New Delhi that provides fast-track visa processing and simplified application procedures to business visitors employed by a number of large corporations with important trade and investment relationships with Canada. More than 80 companies have been invited to participate and 50 have been enrolled. Since the program's inception, over 1,800 visas have been submitted, with a refusal rate of less than 1%.

We face some challenges in processing applications. While we control the number of visas we issue, we cannot control when visa holders will actually exercise their right to come to Canada. In 2008, fewer parents and grandparents arrived than we had projected, which resulted in lower numbers for this category. The trend is continuing in 2009.

We have seen some increases in processing times, for example, for spouses and partners sponsored by Canadians and permanent residents. Visa offices in Colombo, Hong Kong, and Islamabad have reported increases from eight months at the end of 2007 to 11 months at the end of 2008 and 12 months as of June this year.

In the past three years, the average processing time for spouses and partners in Colombo has increased due to a special effort by CIC and processing partners to prioritize and complete older and more challenging cases. Since 2007, Hong Kong has processed approximately 10% of the global total of spouse and partner applications. This has increased processing times in the office and affected global processing times.

In 2008, the Hong Kong visa office established a family class team dedicated to rooting out fraudulent applications and relationships of convenience and screening for security and criminal inadmissibility. The challenges associated with focused processing in this high-volume office have added time to the application process and to global processing times.

Finally, global processing times for spouses and partners were further compounded by similar increases in two other offices, namely Islamabad and Nairobi, which together processed approximately 16% of the global total of spouse and partner applications in 2007 and 2008. Both of those offices operated in environments of significant civil unrest during those years.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, there are major demands on Canada's Immigration system. It took many years for the application backlog to build up, and it will take many years to draw it down. Exactly how long that will take will depend on a number of factors, including the total number and mix of immigrants we admit every year.

We continue to consult with provincial and territorial governments and stakeholders to learn their needs. And as I mentioned earlier, we are controlling and monitoring the flow of new applications to avoid creating another backlog.

Thank you. I am ready for your questions now.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Karygiannis, you have seven minutes.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Thank you.

Thank you for coming. When the department contacted you about coming to present today, what specifically did they ask you to present? Did they ask you to present about investor class, business class, independent applicants, or family class?

● (0920)

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I asked specifically what we were expected to cover on processing times and I was told it would be the whole gamut. So we are prepared to answer the whole gamut of questions you might have. Hopefully we'll be able to do that.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Thank you.

You touched on family class for Nairobi and Islamabad. I wonder if you can tell me what the waiting time in Nairobi was in 2006 and 2008 and what it is presently for spouses, partners, and dependent children.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** If you'll just give me a minute, I'll check on that.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Save them the hassle of looking it up in there.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Do you want 2006 and 2008?

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Yes, Madam.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** For Nairobi, for spouses and partners and dependent children, I have 13 months in 2007 and 22 months in 2008 for 80% of the cases.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** According to your website, it was 25 months in 2008, and that's an increase of maybe 2.3%.

I want to go over some figures with you for Accra, Cairo, Nairobi, Pretoria, Rabat, Kingston, Jamaica, and Port-au-Prince. Accra went from 18 months to 20 months. That's an 11% increase. Cairo went from seven months to 11 months, which is a 57% increase. Nairobi we talked about. Pretoria went from 10 months to 12 months, which is a 20% increase. Rabat went from seven months to 10 months, which is a 42% increase. Kingston, Jamaica, went from eight months to 14 months, which is a 75% increase. Port-au-Prince went from 16 months to 18 months, a 12.5% increase. That's for spouses.

I want to also talk to you about dependent children. Accra went from 17 months to 22 months. That's a 29% increase. Nairobi went from 19 months to 33 months, which is an increase of 73.68%. Pretoria went from seven months to 15 months, a 114.28% increase. Kingston went from six months to nine months, a 50% increase. All these folks I'm talking about are immigrants who are coming to Canada from a particular background: African.

Why are they taking longer than other posts?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I'm not going to validate your numbers, because you went way too fast, but I will say that in terms of processing—

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** If you don't want to validate my numbers, do this. Why don't you go to Port-au-Prince? Or you choose what post and let's validate the numbers in one post. Let's validate the numbers in Nairobi for dependent children from 2006 to 2008.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** The number I have in my book is that in Nairobi, 80% of the cases in 2006 were done in 13 months, and it's now 22 months in 2008.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** How much does it state now?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** It's 22 months for 2008.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Are those the numbers you have on your website?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I can't answer that because I'd have to see what exactly has been posted on the website.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** How often do you change the website?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Again, I'm not sure I can answer that. I would say that it is done regularly.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** This is from your website. It's straight off your website. The numbers on your website you cannot validate. I'm just wondering....

**Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** A point of order.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Stop the clock, Chair, please.

**The Chair:** There's a point of order. We'd better stop the clock here.

You have a point of order, sir?

**Mr. Devinder Shory:** I'm just a visitor today.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** You cannot make a point of order.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, sir, go ahead.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Maybe I could give a bit of an explanation of what affects processing times.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** I'm just telling you that in those posts that applicants are coming from, your department seems to be using a very heavy-handed approach in having people wait so long, especially in Nairobi. It's 92% and 114% and 73%. Why? If you know there is turbulence there, why are you not allocating extra staff?

● (0925)

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Mr. Karygiannis, I think you know that we have the staff that we have, and we also have a number of priorities in terms of family class, in terms of skilled workers, and in terms of provincial nominees, and we try to balance all of that.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Ms. Deschênes, what is more important than spouses and children?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** The complexity of spouses and children changes according to where they're coming from. I think you know that, and some cases are more difficult in terms of needing interviews. In other cases, we can do without interviews. For some cases, there are more medical problems than in other places, so sometimes medicals—

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** You're trying to tell me that there are more medical problems in Nairobi than there are in Russia?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** In Nairobi there's also the issue of correspondence and being able to reach people and getting people. A large number of people miss their interviews. We are trying.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** What's changed in two years, from 2006 to 2008?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Certainly in Nairobi, there was a period of time when the office, because of the situation in Nairobi, could not process cases, couldn't get out to do area trips. There was an incident that happened over that period of time. That caused some problems. You will remember that processing time is not only the time it takes to process the case, but it starts from the time the case arrives at a mission.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** What is happening in Kingston, Jamaica, where it goes from eight months to 14 months?

**The Chair:** This will have to be your last question, Mr. Karygiannis.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** A 75% increase and a 50% increase. What happened in Kingston, Jamaica?

Okay, I'll give you Nairobi.

What happened in Kingston, Jamaica? I'll tell you what happened. They're black and you don't want them in.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC):** What?

**The Chair:** We're going to move on to Ms. Thi Lac.

A point of order, Mr. Young.

**Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I've sat on committees at Queen's Park, and on Parliament Hill here now for a year, and I find it so embarrassing when Mr. Karygiannis bullies and interrupts the people who come here to give us information. There is such a thing as common courtesy.

Thank you.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, if I made a derogatory remark, allow me to apologize. Let me rephrase this. These are African—

**The Chair:** No, no, you're not....

We're on this point of order.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** On the point of order, I used the wrong word and I want to apologize to the department. However, I do want to point out to the department that these are African people who are coming in and maybe we should look at expediting this thing.

**The Chair:** Ms. Thi Lac, you have the floor for seven minutes.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Ladies, thank you for being here this morning to discuss processing times for the immigration applications you receive.

You referred to the action plan for faster immigration. You said that, since February 2008, more than 240,000 applications were received, that you have processed 100,000 of them, and that only 8,000 visas have been issued to skilled workers.

Did you really mean 8,000 visas out of 100,000 applications?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** We have processed 100,000 applications. At the Sydney office, we determined who complied with departmental instructions and who did not.

[English]

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** A point of order. I'm sorry to do this again. May I request that during today and the next few sessions, given what we've agreed to at the committee, that we focus our discussion—questions and answers and debate—specifically on family class and investment class, please?

If not, if we open up the whole notion of skilled workers, students...unless we agree to study all of that, it could be a very long discussion. I'm wondering whether we could determine that so it's there for everyone.

**The Chair:** Just a moment, please.

Is this on the same point, Monsieur?

Proceed.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** We have officials here before us. In my opinion, committee members are free to ask them any questions they choose. When we write our report, we will determine what is part of our area of study and what is not, but it is not up to a member of another party to determine whether the question my colleague asked is within the scope of the study.

• (0930)

[English]

**The Chair:** Just give me a moment.

Ms. Chow, we're back on this topic that you raised earlier, and I'm going to repeat what I said; that is, I would suggest that if you want more witnesses on a particular topic that you meet after this meeting with Mr. Bevilacqua and Monsieur St-Cyr and Mr. Dykstra and you can talk about it.

My recollection of how this was set up was that it was of a general nature. The ministry people here are to give a general overview and the witnesses who are coming will be called for specific areas. That was my recollection of how it was.

Quite frankly, I agree with Monsieur St-Cyr.

As you can tell, I'm pretty lenient in questions.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Go for it.

**The Chair:** Members of the committee, as long as they're polite and relatively on topic, can ask anything they like.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Ms. Thi Lac, you're back on the air.

The clock is running.

[Translation]

**Mme Claudette Deschênes:** Once the Sydney office has decided which applications will be forwarded to the mission, which will be denied with applicants' money refunded, missions receive the applications. The 100,000 figure represents applications which are being processed in missions, either at the interview stage or at the health and security check stage. There are also 8,000 people whose applications have been processed and who have received visas.

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** Eight thousand out of 100,000 is an approval rate of 8%. Would it not be more appropriate to say that these applications are being processed rather than they have been processed?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** They are being processed.

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** All right.

You said that, as of November, you had to suspend processing for nine months because the criteria had yet to be set. Since then, given that the new criteria have been set, have you managed to catch up the backlog caused by the nine-month break? Did the criteria help with processing or are you just as far behind?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** We are a little behind. That is why we cannot tell you whether applications received in December will be finalized within six or 12 months. Applications are delayed and processing times are longer. There are approximately 16,000 cases that we have not yet completely gone through, but, in the large majority of cases, it just involves refunding applicants who are not eligible under the instructions.

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** At this point, 8% of the applications being processed have been successful.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Eight thousand were finalized.

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** All right, but out of 100,000 applications, what is the approximate success rate? Aside from the 8,000 applications that were allowed, how many others were processed but were not successful?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I will give you an approximate percentage from memory. Sixty percent of applications submitted before the instructions were announced did not comply with them. We can check and give you the exact figure at a later date.

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** Are you saying that 60% of applications are denied?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Yes. Approximately 75% of new applications that are being submitted seem to comply with the criteria. I say “seem to” because, at the moment, the Sydney office asks for minimal information. We do not yet have a computer system in place that allows us to ask for all the documents from the outset. A percentage of applications will be accepted by the Sydney office and sent to the various missions. Once the missions request all the documents, they will see that some people do not meet the criteria.

• (0935)

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** On the matter of the processing of applications in the spouses or children category, Bloc Québécois members like to say that, in Canada, we cannot have the same standards from coast to coast because realities are different. That must also be the case in other countries. You say that, in Africa, the process is sometimes longer because some things are processed differently.

Could your department not consider the distinctiveness that exists in Africa to harmonize rules or relax them? I am not saying that the rules should be different, but, in some countries, we could be using a different processing system with respect, for instance, to health and security requirements, than what is used in European countries where these types of standards do not need to be established.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** In part, the standards are international; they are the same everywhere. We adjust standards based on risk. Our problem is that, in the regions where it is difficult to establish procedures, we also find that there is no supporting documentation. So, it is far more difficult to relax some criteria.

We are trying to see how sponsors in Canada can help us, especially in the family class. On the other hand, we do not want to place all of the responsibility on sponsors who will end up with the same problems as us, in other words, contacting people, finding documents, and so on. It is no easier either way. We are trying to see what can be done on the private sponsorship of refugees and with the family class. But, in the end, if we deny the application before people have all their documents...

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** I understand, Ms. Deschênes. I am sorry, but I must interrupt because I have one final question that I feel is important.

[English]

**The Chair:** You don't have time for a question, unless it takes two seconds.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** You are facing double the difficulty in those countries. Do you have double the staff to process the applications or do you have the same amount of staff as in the embassies elsewhere else?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I would not say we have double the workload, but, compared to the traffic in the embassies, it is more than normal.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Thaï Thi Lac.

Ms. Chow.

[English]

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Thank you.

I actually have something like six questions. What I'm going to do is ask them all, and you can batch them together.

I know that for a family class sponsor, they put in the \$75 sponsorship fee and then it takes a year or two years to sort that out, and then the permanent residence application fee is \$475 for each person. Why would you take both up front, if you normally take quite a bit of time for the sponsorship application to go through first—a year or two years—and then the permanent residence application comes later? Why not separate them? That's number one.

Number two, you don't really need the medical until the application is fairly far along. Often I've seen that they would do a medical examination—this would be for the applicant overseas—and then the medical examination would expire. Then it costs them quite a bit of money to redo it. They have to travel far distances. Can it be coordinated so they only need to do one medical rather than repeating medicals over and over again, and repeating the security clearance over and over again, because they are not in sync with each other?

My second batch of questions really concerns the dollar amounts. I know in 2005 you got an extra \$36 million to help out the visa posts overseas that are the busiest. I think that money would have run out by now. Are you requesting more funds because you have three or four trouble spots that have very long wait times? I notice your expenditures are not very high. How do you divide up your expenditures in visa posts overseas, especially those in the areas where it impacts tremendously on Canadians because Canadians are waiting for their fathers, mothers, or kids coming from overseas?

I have one case where a person waited seven years to bring a daughter from Nairobi to Canada. This is a 12-year-old daughter, and I can't imagine what happens to a 12-year-old waiting for seven years. She was a lot younger than 12 back then. So there are desperate situations in some of the visa posts overseas. What kinds of resources do you need in order to speed that up?

Speaking about resources, I know your department tried several times to have a computer program that could speed it up, and then it keeps not working out and you try it again. I look at Australia. They have computer tracking programs. An applicant in Australia can look at their sponsor—let's say it's the father—and you can tell what number the application is, how long the wait is. It's completely transparent.



In our case it's not transparent at all, and all our offices get asked, and you get asked all the time, "What happened to my application?" or "Where is my application?" So every MP's office gets a huge number of calls. We then ask the visa office overseas, and it goes back and forth about a status update. Why not load it up on the computer to save MPs' offices a lot of time and also save the applicants in Canada grief?

My last question concerns the targets. Have they changed? Often the processing stops when you've met the target in an area. Let's say the target is 5,000 parents, or whatever, from the Beijing visa post. Once the target is met, then you don't process any more. That's my understanding of how it works. So have the targets changed according to how many applications come in? Has it changed in the last four or five years, and if it hasn't changed, why is there such a backlog?

• (0940)

**The Chair:** You have two and a half minutes to answer those six questions. You can pick a question.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I'll go with question one, which is about fees and separating, and I would say that it's an exciting question, but I can't answer it because it's under litigation. So hopefully we can get through the litigation and then we can actually look at that question.

On the issue of medicals and making sure they don't expire, I can tell you that as much as clients, applicants, family, and MPs can be upset at that, no visa officer likes to have to redo the same work on a file, so it's something we very much try to avoid. We used to wait and do medicals just at the end of everything being done. We found that our processing times were terrible because we added the two, three, or four months of the medical. So in many places we've moved to try to do the medicals up front, because maybe 50% of the cases actually move quite quickly and it works. There are always cases where we get into that issue. I think in places like Nairobi, where this is more of a problem, we try to be very careful as to when we request the medical so that we avoid having that.

One of the problems, of course, is if you have tuberculosis, for example, you have to be treated for tuberculosis before you get your medical result. So sometimes by the time the medical result has come, it has an expiry date of a couple of weeks and we can't help ourselves but start the process.

On the \$36 million, which year were you...?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** I think it was 2005.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I'm not sure. I think that was additional money that was given for the parents and grandparents.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** That's right, yes.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I think at this point, with the money we've got in the department, we're not likely to be getting more, but I think what's more important for us in the operations is to see how we can get more efficient, which goes into your question about global—

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Deschênes.

Mr. Calandra.

• (0945)

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to just begin by thanking you. I know how difficult it must have been under the 13 years of the previous administration to wait for reforms that never came and to have the waiting list increase to a million people. I can only imagine how difficult that must have been for you and the department. I know how hard you've been working to help implement some of the reforms we've brought in, which according to many of my constituents have helped restore their faith in Canada's immigration system in tackling the wait list and working together with the provinces. So I commend you and your officials for what I believe is some extraordinary work in helping address the real deficiencies of our immigration system that came out of 13 long years of inaction by the previous government.

Having said that, just to touch a little bit further on what Ms. Thi Lac said and to go a bit down that road, how do you redistribute resources to adjust for changing local needs in immigration source countries?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** That's tied to the target and the level, so every year we look at what the levels plan is that's submitted to Parliament. We look at what types of applications we have where. We look at the priorities in terms of provincial nominees, in terms of investors, and in terms of business, and we look at the resources we have in place. We also look at what potential growth area there is in the mission. Many missions are at full capacity and we couldn't put anyone else there. You need to know that every time we move someone from one place to another, we lose money on that move and have to give more money to DFAIT to do that because of the costs and so on. That's how we try to balance it, and we try to look at it not only from day to day or year to year but for the longer term.

Again, I guess I would like to say that for us it's how to modernize our system, how to leverage our global case management, which will be rolled out next year, how to look at creating a virtual network so that we can make certain decisions, not necessarily in situ but somewhere in more of a centralized environment. That is what will get us better processing times in the longer term.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** I have another question, just before I hand it off. In our economic action plan we allocated some resources for improving or modernizing Canada's immigration system. Part of that money was to go to hiring and training more visa officers. I'm wondering what are some of the challenges you're facing in increasing staff levels at missions abroad.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** The biggest challenge we have is, of course, that it takes about two years to bring a new officer up to speed to be able to go and deliver the program overseas. Then one of the other challenges is creating space for them. Sometimes we basically just get enough officers hired to replace the ones who have retired, so it's a constant catch-up.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** I will transfer it over to Ms. Grewal.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** It's my understanding that the recent Mexican visa imposition highlights the flexibility of your department in deploying resources. Could you tell us about that?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** The visa imposition was quite a complex process for us. We couldn't announce it too quickly, but we had to get ourselves organized. We hired a number of retired officers to support us in the initial stages. In anticipation, we did some local hiring without tipping anyone off that we were imposing restrictions. During the first few weeks, we depended a lot on all the resources in the mission. Even the ambassador was creating files for us at night and over the weekends. For the first couple of weeks, our staff in Mexico worked pretty much 22 hours a day to get it working.

I am glad to report that we are back to normal. We are now processing applications for people who will be travelling in December and January.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** The rest of my time I will pass to Mr. Young.

**Mr. Terence Young:** I saw that you reduced the initial assessment time for the federal skilled worker program from years to weeks. You are making decisions within six to 12 months instead of six years. I have never seen such a change in management in government. It is a massive improvement. Could you tell us about your efforts to centralize the intake for skilled workers? By the way, this holds promise for other categories of immigrants as well.

• (0950)

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** We would have liked to centralize a full application, but that would have meant that all these applications would have come to Sydney. The issue was trying to get some of the administrative work out of the missions. It is very expensive to put people overseas. The overseas officers need to focus on where the risk exists.

When we get global case management—and we are also working on an e-application process—we will have a virtual central office that will do all the front end and the back end. Only the work that requires local knowledge will go back to the missions. It is a beginning. It has growing pains, but we are getting to where we need to go.

**Mr. Terence Young:** You talked about your e-services program, the pilot project for students. This is ideal because students communicate by computer. It's first nature to them, and I think it holds great promise. But as soon as I see “e-” something, I think of the e-Health problem in the province of Ontario, where they blew \$600 million to \$1 billion on consultants and made very little progress. Can you assure us that this program is being handled responsibly and tell us about the expansion of services to speed up application times?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I will take the opportunity to answer Ms. Chow's question also. We're trying to connect with global case management, and it will soon be possible to have people submit online. Many cases are also supported by consultants and lawyers. They will be able to do the same thing. For applicants who are not at ease with computers, China and India have application centre networks. We will have a network available to support other people. I can assure you, we are doing all we can, and there is lots of oversight on all the work we are doing to deliver our program.

**The Chair:** We're going to start a second round, and unless the opposition gets generous, the government will lose out.

Mr. Bevilacqua.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.):** I want to follow up on some of the points that were raised by some of the Conservative political commercials. I thought they were limited to TV, radio, websites, and newspapers, but I guess they are seeping into committee hearings.

**The Chair:** I was asking you to be generous, Mr. Bevilacqua.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** This is ultimately generous, but I do want to thank the officials for appearing. I know how hard you work to bring about positive change to a system that requires positive change.

I also want to bring to your attention, so that you perhaps have a better understanding of what transpired here this morning, that if you look at the minutes of proceedings of the meeting of Thursday, October 1, 2009—that's meeting 25—you will find that the third-last point made is that beginning on October 29 the committee will undertake a study of wait times by hearing two panels of witnesses: one on family reunification and another on investors. I think that was very clear. This is in our committee minutes. They weren't drafted by Mr. Karygiannis, Ms. Mendes, Ms. Chow, or whoever else. These are our minutes, and we need to respect that. I think the officials need to be told exactly what we are studying.

I know that you're operating in good faith. I don't question what you're doing at all. Now, I'm left with the responsibility, as a member of Parliament—because I am responsible to the Parliament of Canada to get the information that is required on behalf of Canadians, whom we collectively serve here in the House of Commons—to see that the department provides a detailed analysis of what exactly is going on in these two areas, since unfortunately you were given the wrong directions as to the reasons you were appearing here today.

I think there should also be a time limitation for getting this report. We have to study this thing forthwith; therefore, the report needs to be in this committee within no more than seven sitting days. I think it's only fair, and it's a sense of justice, Mr. Chairman, because at the end of the day, in order to do our job we need to honour the commitments we make as parliamentarians.

• (0955)

**The Chair:** You know, I offered a suggestion earlier. If the committee wants to reject that suggestion and keep going on these things.... These witnesses are here for questions. If you don't want to ask questions, I'm sure the government has questions. Monsieur St-Cyr has questions.

If there was a mistake made by this table, we apologize. I don't think there was, but I've offered a solution, and hopefully the three critics and the secretary will solve it.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Mr. Chairman, I'm not asking for anything that is out of the ordinary. I've been a minister before, and I've instructed officials to provide information to sitting members of Parliament. That's what we do. So I think the record should show that this request has been made and that a response should be coming from the department on those two specific issues. As you know, Mr. Chairman, I'm very flexible—

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Dykstra.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** —but I don't think anybody should be fooling members of Parliament.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Bevilacqua, it's a point of order.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** We have an hour here dedicated to asking officials questions.

**The Chair:** Actually, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** We've had repeated comments about whether or not these folks have presented in good faith. They have. I would ask, if Mr. Bevilacqua has some questions for the officials who are here, that he ask them, and if we would like to try to work through the direction that the clerk gave to the officials, if we want to work through that issue after this meeting is concluded, I'd be happy to do that.

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order.

Proceed with the clock. Do the Liberals have any more questions?

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** I do have a point of order on that point of order.

**The Chair:** On a point of order, Mr. Karygiannis.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** I think, Chair, you will find it also the responsibility, not only to yourselves but also to the person from the government who sits on the steering committee, to make sure that what the minutes reflected is what the departmental officials are coming forth to testify on. That responsibility lies on the parliamentary secretary.

**The Chair:** Well, Mr. Karygiannis, as I said, if this table has made an error, I apologize for that.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Chair, it's one thing to—

**The Chair:** I've offered a suggestion as to how we can rectify that.

I'm going to go to Monsieur St-Cyr for questions.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to take advantage of your presence here today to ask you a question that concerns me.

When people come to their members of Parliament to ask for help, members often have a difficult time obtaining information on the status of their case. When people submit their applications, the department gives them no idea of the progress of their case. I understand it would probably be difficult for officials in the department to answer everyone who is concerned about the fact that they submitted an application months ago and have not yet received news, etc.

However, when people come to us to raise complex or worrisome cases, we try to contact your organization but it is often difficult to find out the stage the case is at.

Is there a clear policy on the assistance you can provide members of Parliament so that they can help a fellow citizen or a future citizen through the process?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I believe at the beginning of the year you were given a letter explaining how to contact the department. It included numbers and addresses. There are definitely services for members. We try to provide you with as much information as possible.

Also, I would like to somewhat correct what you said regarding requests from clients. As much as possible, we try to give them the information they request. However, we cannot use all our resources for that. Generally, we tell them how long it will take for their case to be processed, and we tell them that they should not contact us in writing during that period. In that regard, it is true that some write to us and do not receive an answer. However, when a case is unusual, we provide the information.

I would now like to tell you what our objective is in terms of modernization. Ms. Chow referred to Australia and the fact that they provided information. In this regard, we want to go even further. The idea is to provide clients with an update on their case every three, six or nine months. That way, clients would not have to go to somewhere and check the status of their case. This information would automatically be sent to them by email. We have not reached that point yet. First, we have to finalize our global case management system. I would add that these improvements are definitely part of our plan in the coming years.

If, as members of Parliament, you do not receive the information you need, the director general of case management can also help you.

• (1000)

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Earlier, there was some discussion of the overall refusal rate for applications. You said that in the past, it could be as high as 60%, but that it had dropped. Given that the approval rate is now 75%, I would conclude that the refusal rate is 25%. Have I understood correctly?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** That is for the initial analysis, in Sydney. The cases submitted seem to meet the criteria.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** But 25% is still rather high.

Can people submitting applications do their own assessment to see whether, in principal, they meet all the criteria? Is there a part of the application that can only be assessed by officials, meaning that applicants cannot themselves determine whether or not they meet the criteria?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** On our Web site, there is information that allows applicants to do a self-assessment. We may have to continue to improve this tool, but it does exist.

In applications, individuals often use the words or criteria exactly as they appear in our documents. Yet, when we look at their experience in greater detail, we realize that their CV does not necessarily correspond to reality.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I think our time has concluded.

It's been fun, hasn't it?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Yes, it has.

**The Chair:** I expect the three critics and our parliamentary secretary will be having some discussions, and the clerk may or may not ask you to come back at a future time. We'll anxiously wait for the four groups to approach the chair and tell me what they want to do.

I want to thank you for coming once again and providing the information you have. On behalf of the committee, thank you very much, Ms. Deschênes and Ms. Smith.

We're going to suspend for a few minutes until we have our next panel.

• \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•

• (1005)

**The Chair:** Okay, ladies and gentlemen, we're going to start our second panel this morning.

We have two witnesses before us: Marc Audet, who is the vice-chair of the immigrant investor program at Desjardins Trust; and Imran Qayyum, who is with the Canadian Migration Institute.

Good morning, gentlemen. I welcome both of you here today. You each have up to 10 minutes to make a presentation to the committee, and then members of the committee may have questions for you.

A point of order, Monsieur St-Cyr.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Chair, Mr. Audet brought us copies of a document that has some parts in English only and others in French only.

I am asking for the unanimous consent of the committee so that this document can still be distributed. It includes a table that is only in English but that would help committee members follow the presentation.

[English]

**The Chair:** Some documents are in English and some are in French. Monsieur St-Cyr has asked that all documents be allowed to be filed. Does everybody agree? Is it unanimous?

Okay, that is agreed to.

Mr. Qayyum, you may begin.

**Mr. Imran Qayyum (Chair, Canadian Migration Institute):** Thank you.

Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Imran Qayyum and I'm the chair of the Canadian Migration Institute, which I will refer to as CMI. The role of CMI is to provide a platform for authorized immigration representatives who work collaboratively to enhance their profession.

The Canadian Migration Institute came into existence in September 2007, and we currently represent over 1,500 fellows, all of whom are authorized immigration representatives belonging to the immigration consulting, legal, and Quebec notary professions. These fellows practice throughout Canada and overseas.

CMI's mandate is to educate, accredit, advocate, and act as a policy research body on behalf of fellows. As the largest professional organization of its kind in North America, we're honoured to be here today in order to share our views on the subject of processing times related to the family class and investor class of immigrants.

Let me start by sharing some of our observations on the family class, which for the purposes of today's submission we've divided up into two main categories: spousal or partner applications, which I will refer to as FC1; and parent or grandparent applications, which I will refer to as FC4.

As the committee knows, all family class cases are initiated in Canada when the application is submitted to the case processing centre in Mississauga, commonly known as CPC Mississauga. The case processing centre confirms whether or not the sponsor, who is sponsoring his or her close family relative, meets the legislative requirements to do so. In the case of FC1-type applications, this process takes between one to two months, whereas in the case of FC4-type applications, this process is taking between 32 to 36 months. Once the case processing centre in Mississauga accepts the sponsorship and confirms the eligibility of the sponsor, the application is forwarded to an overseas visa processing post or to the MICC, as in the case of sponsors residing in the province of Quebec.

In today's submission I'll be referring to statistics that were obtained through access to information requests made by Lexbase for FC1 and FC4 cases for the period of April 2008 to March 2009. These statistics show that during the 12-month period in question, overseas visa posts completed approximately 40,000 FC1 cases. 80% of these cases were completed within 11 months or less. During the same period, approximately 9,800 FC4 cases were completed; 80% of these cases were completed within 20 months or less.

Given that one of the objectives of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act is to see that family members are reunited in Canada, CMI is concerned that these processing times run contrary to the spirit of the family reunification objective of IRPA. We believe more can be done, especially in the FC4 category.

Some of CMI's recommendations to address these issues are as follows.

First, we would recommend that the government allocate more resources to FC4 processing.

Second, we would recommend the perfected application for FC4 cases, wherein sponsorship forms as well as the immigrant forms and supporting documents are submitted to CPC Mississauga, as is the case for FC1-type applications.

Last, we would encourage CPC Mississauga to use electronic communications with the sponsor or their authorized representative as often as possible when acknowledging receipt of sponsorship applications or requesting additional information or supporting documentation. Leveraging electronic communication would certainly alleviate some of the current pressures contributing to lengthy processing times.

I would now like to turn your attention to CMI's views on the investor class processing times. For today's submission, I will be making reference to statistics obtained through access to information requests made by HSBC for the period of January 2009 to August 2009.

As of August 2009, the global inventory for investor class cases was more than 11,000. Given that each case requires, at minimum, an investment of \$400,000 in Canada, this inventory represents a potential of \$4.4 billion in available dormant and virtually zero-cost stimulus capital that could be flowing to Canada to fund infrastructure projects to stimulate the economy.

• (1010)

The current annual target set by Citizenship and Immigration Canada for investor class cases is 2,155. It is worth noting that the current annual target of 2,155 represents final dispositions, or FDs. These numbers include refused or withdrawn applications, not just approved cases.

For example, from January until August 31, 2009, of the 1,697 final dispositions, approximately 50% were approved cases, 25% were refused cases, and 25% were applications withdrawn by the investors themselves, who were largely frustrated by the long processing delays. If extrapolated and applied to the current inventory of cases in process, this 25% withdrawal rate represents a potential \$1 billion of zero-cost stimulus capital that Canada will never benefit from.

According to our calculations, the current inventory of 11,000-plus investor applications at an annual target of approximately 2,000 represents a global average processing time of more than five years. This year to date, over 4,000 new applications have been received, representing double the current annual processing target. With new application intake rates at this level, we believe processing times for investors will continue to grow as inventories balloon.

By definition, investor applicants are successful, high-networked individuals with business experience willing to invest \$400,000 of their capital for five years to be used by participating provinces for infrastructure and other economic priorities. Lengthy processing times represent a clear discouragement to such applicants and will encourage withdrawals of applications as these highly desirable immigrants turn to other, more attractive options available to them globally.

Nor is the economic impact of these individuals and their families limited to their \$400,000 qualifying investment. These individuals represent a significant potential additional positive economic impact as they and their families establish in Canada and buy homes, cars, and furniture, and make other investments for their future in Canada.

Measures must be introduced that will shorten processing times in order not to miss the opportunity to quickly flow desperately needed

zero-cost capital to provincial governments, who in turn can use it for much-needed infrastructure projects and related stimulus spending.

Once again, the current inventory represents over \$4.4 billion in available potential capital. This statement bears repeating because it is so important.

Some of CMI's recommendations to address these issues are as follows. First, we recommend increasing the annual target for federal and investor applications to 5,000 FDs per year, which will have an immediate impact on reducing processing times. The federal immigrant investor program already appears to be losing significant market share to the Quebec immigrant investor program, which underwent changes to make the Quebec program more attractive in February 2009. Quebec has established an ambitious target for 2009 of 2,004 actual approvals and investments, not final dispositions. It's important to understand the difference.

Quebec processing times are generally much better than federal processing times, and recognizing the importance of this investment capital during these tough economic times, the Quebec trend is toward faster decision-making.

CMI would suggest the need to balance the interest of all Canadian provinces and territories and the benefits they receive individually through immigration necessitates a substantial increase in the annual federal investor processing targets.

Second, CMI would recommend establishing a centralized intake office, or CIO, for investor applicants in Canada. The establishment of a CIO would allow for more training and specialization for reviewing officers related to business cases, centralized and coordinated management of applications, and increased program security and integrity. This recommendation would also result in additional employment opportunities for Canadians. Given that 85% of federal investor cases are assessed without the need for an interview, adopting a CIO at the front end and reviewing investor cases would make it possible to address such issues as identity, available funds, qualifying business experience, and source of funds.

CMI suggests CIC establish at such a CIO an eligibility requirement step for investors, similar to the federal skilled worker program. This would be separated from the processing under the regulations. This would also remove the current investors simplified application process, which many believe is a significant cause of the current processing delays.

• (1015)

**The Chair:** Mr. Qayyum, I've given you a long, long minute—

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** My apologies, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** —but your comments are excellent, and if it's possible for you to provide your written statements to the clerk, he will distribute them at a later date to the members of the committee. I'm sure the committee members will have questions of you, sir.

Mr. Audet, do we have the documents that were referred to?

**The Clerk:** They're not back from copying yet.

**The Chair:** While you're making your presentation, members won't have them yet. They're somewhere being copied.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Can we have one per caucus, at least? You have seven copies. [English]

• (1020)

**The Chair:** Sure, why not.

Mr. Audet, welcome. If you could make your presentation to us now, we'd appreciate it. Thank you, sir.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Audet (Vice-Chair, Immigrant Investor Program, Desjardins Trust):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is Marc Audet, and I have been vice-chair of the Investor Immigrant Program at Desjardins Trust since 1995. I have a team of 30 people who work on this program, and this team is in direct contact with clients from 70 different countries. I thank you for this invitation.

I would invite those who have the first table in front of them to take a look at it. It summarizes the situation somewhat and gives you an overview of the Investor Immigrant Program in Quebec as well as at the federal level, since 2006. It was prepared using the statistics we have available.

On the first table....

[English]

**The Chair:** You're going to have to elaborate more when you're talking about these, because we are short of documents. For example, the analysts don't have one, I don't have one, but each caucus has one.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Audet:** Very well.

On the first table, you will find an overview of the Investor Immigrant Program since 2006. In the last few years, for Quebec and federal cases combined, there have been between 9,000 and 10,000 applications from investor immigrants per year from all over the world. This is a market that should remain at that level. It is not a market of 25,000 or 3,000 cases per year, but it should remain stable. It is relatively lower than other immigrant classes.

That said, with respect to the number of cases, both at the federal level and in Quebec, processed annually by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, it would be approximately one third. In 2008, some 3,300 cases were processed.

A little further on you will find a second block...

[English]

**The Chair:** There's a point of order. Excuse me, Mr. Audet.

Ms. Mendes.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** It's not really a point of order—

**The Chair:** Well, then we're going to continue.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** I can't find the figures.

**Mr. Marc Audet:** It's still on the first table.

**The Chair:** I don't even have what you have, so we'll have to proceed.

Go ahead, sir.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Audet:** I can certainly come and help you individually later on.

I would like to echo what Imran mentioned earlier: the federal government does indeed make 2,000 decisions per year. That is somewhat comical. In other words, with the federal program's annual goal of 2,000, the higher the inventory, the longer the delays, the more individuals withdraw and the more CIC meets its objectives. So, if this same type and level of objective were to be maintained based on the current inventory—as mentioned, over 11,000 federally and 3,000 in Quebec—our millionaires have to wait more than five years to be told that we are interested in their application and their \$400,000 investment.

I am referring to the third block for those of you who have it. It shows the number of investments, individuals who have invested \$400,000 over the last few years. Every year, that amounts to 3,000 cases, at the Quebec and federal levels combined, that Canada receives. That amounts to \$1.2 billion a year currently coming into Canada.

However, under Quebec's three-year plan for investor immigrants, in the coming years, Quebec alone should achieve 3,000 investments. Currently, there are 3,000 investments combined, and Quebec has a three-year plan to be more effective in the coming years. We encourage the federal government to do the same, given the number of cases and the delays, as it would mean an additional \$2 billion in our economy.

There is one interesting point to note on the last line of my table. Even if CIC were to adopt an enhanced investor policy that made it possible to double the number of cases processed, for example, the relative weight of investors among other categories would remain negligible, going from 4% to 6%. So, you double the number of investments without doubling the relative weight of investors in comparison with the other classes, which are equally important.

There are currently 14,000 investors online waiting to be granted permanent residence in Canada when you combine Quebec and federal numbers. They want to invest \$400,000 in the provinces and settle there. In concrete terms, that means they would purchase property and other durable goods, often at rates that would be higher than average, given their financial wealth. We are conscious of the fact that CIC has hundreds of thousands of cases in its inventory—perhaps even one million—all classes combined, that resources are limited and that choices must be made.

Considering the current economic situation, experienced economists, especially in Quebec, have shown that the program provides an economic benefit, that a high percentage of waiting investors have other options, contrary to other immigrant classes, and their situation can change quickly, that 90% of investors apply to immigrate to Canada mainly so that their children can have a high-quality university education, that they will put down roots here, that they will transfer their family assets here and that the impact in terms of the number of visas issued is negligible in comparison with other classes. It represents 3.7 visas.

Case selection in Quebec has already been done. Only the medical and security checks are left. For these already selected cases, matters could be expedited. Recently, Bill C-50 gave the minister complete flexibility in setting priorities. Canada should therefore pay special attention to this category.

In closing, if we do not take action and establish a policy, both for Quebec and Canada, that would allow this type of case to be processed within a maximum of 24 months—we believe that to be the longest period our investors are willing to tolerate—we run the risk that the most sophisticated and affluent investors will go elsewhere, and Canada will only choose second-tier investors, without meaning to be derogatory. Those investors would not be Canada's best ambassadors to their business communities abroad.

•(1025)

Also, CIC will run the risk of difficult inventory management when it implements, in the near future, its proposal to increase the mandatory \$400,000 investment. So we will be asking these investors to make a larger investment, and telling them to wait five years. If CIC is unable to meet such objectives, other avenues need to be quickly explored in order for our schools to be able to take in the children of those immigrating investors, until those kids are old enough to attend university. Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Karygiannis.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before my question to the panellists, I would like to clarify a point I made in the first session of today's meeting. I in no way claim that the panellists' motives were to block entrance to Canada of Africans. I'm deeply frustrated by the long delays and waiting times from source countries with large African populations. I do, however, see a pattern that concerns me, and that is that the applicants from African-source countries continue to wait longer periods of time to be accepted into Canada.

If I attacked verbally the two panellists, I apologize to them, and I will be following up with them.

I would like to share my time with Ms. Mendes.

**The Chair:** Ms. Mendes.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Qayyum.

[Translation]

Thank you very much, Mr. Audet. First, I have a question for you. I want to refer you to the following table you provided... Well, there are no page numbers. It looks like therefore I'm showing you.

[English]

**The Chair:** What is this one? Is it page 3?

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** It looks like the one I am showing you. It doesn't have a page number.

[Translation]

**An hon. member:** Federal (Cases) or Quebec (Cases)?

**Mr. Marc Audet:** There are two tables at the top.

[English]

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** It's "Applications Received Abroad—Investors". It's the federal case.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Audet:** In the top right corner, it says "Federal"?

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** No, I don't have a page number.

**An hon. member:** It is "Federal".

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** We see here that, in 2009—I am obviously referring only to the first quarter—there is a 25% drop in the number of applications made in the investor class.

Do you believe that the negative reputation of Canada's Immigrant Investor Program is the reason for the decreased number of applications to the program?

•(1030)

**Mr. Marc Audet:** There are several factors for this, the first perhaps being the global economic situation. Unfortunately, for some investors, one of the criteria is proving a minimum net worth of \$800,000. And some investors have seen the value of their assets drop below the \$800,000 mark. This element affects some of these candidates.

Another important element: our neighbours, the Americans, have a similar program to ours, called the EB-5. A \$500,000 U.S. investment is required for various pilot projects under this program; they are increasingly efficient and are trying to process applications more rapidly. So, our American colleagues are currently promoting this program heavily around the world. They are simply asking immigrant investors if they are prepared to wait five years, although the Canadian program is a good one. So we now have competition in terms of the wait times, and it is a bit of a thorn in our side. Other than that, we have an excellent program.

[English]

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** Do I still have time?

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** Mr. Qayyum, I have one question for you.

You mentioned that Quebec seems to be dealing much quicker with their applications on this file. What do you think, or rather know, are the main reasons given to explain the delays?

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** Do you mean the investor delays?

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** Yes.

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** I think there have to be resources. When you set targets for investors, you set them globally, and in our opinion, the targets for this year are 2,155. Once again, that's for final disposition. According to figures that I'll be more than happy to share with the committee, up until August 31, 2009, they had reached 1,697 out of 2,155. Of the 1,697, 446 applications were withdrawn. That's where I'm getting the \$1 billion of lost capital.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** Why were they withdrawn?

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** What we're mostly hearing from our fellows who are dealing with clients is that it is frustration over the five-years-plus waiting time.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** I see; it's the delay.

[Translation]

If I could go back to Mr. Audet—

**Mr. Marc Audet:** If you wish, I could add to that.

With regard to the wait times in Quebec compared to those at the federal level, it is important to understand that the two systems differ. In Quebec, a process was established under the Canada-Quebec Accord: the provincial government pre-selects the immigrants. During the first part of the process, for which Quebec is responsible, a selection certificate for Quebec must be obtained.

At present, this process takes approximately 12 months, an average calculated for all countries. So, an application is filed and a Quebec selection certificate is received about 12 months later. In some places, it may take 8 months; in others, 14 months. Then, candidates have to send their file to the federal government for security reasons.

Since the number of files in both Quebec and Canada is rising, we have determined that the problem is due to the federal government's limited resources. The federal government cannot look at just Quebec's files or just federal files. That is why Quebec is seeing longer wait times. Previously, permanent residence visas were being granted within three or four months once a Quebec selection certificate was obtained. Now, it takes nearly 20 months. This means that 12, 15 or 20 months are being added to the 12 months for the overall process, and we are seeing processing times of about two or three years.

Why are we saying that it is faster? Because at the federal level, it typically takes five years. However, there is a difference between three years and five years.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** Currently, that's about the best we can hope for. That means waiting three years before—

**Mr. Marc Audet:** That depends on the mission and the candidates. However, in general, we tell our candidates around the world not to call us for two years for their permanent residence visa. Otherwise, we would be giving them false hope.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** The Quebec selection certificate (CSQ) can, however, be issued within one year.

**Mr. Marc Audet:** The CSQ can be issued. This is one of our recommendations, that when a candidate has been selected, the

federal government be responsible only for the medical exam and the security check. This process could be expedited, which would promote investments and encourage people to come here.

[English]

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** Mr. Qayyum, what would be a recommendation to address the question at the federal level?

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** If I may continue with my presentation...?

**The Chair:** You're a good manager.

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** Thank you, sir.

The first recommendation we would think would be to increase the targets from 2,000 to at least 5,000. This would have an immediate effect.

The second recommendation would be to establish a centralized intake office similar to what we have seen with the federal skilled worker program. We feel this has made a lot of difference.

Finally, our recommendation would be that obviously priority must be given to federal investor applications. We also believe that resources could be taken from other current but underutilized programs, such as the Canadian experience class, and redistributed towards investor cases. It makes economic sense.

●(1035)

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

Monsieur St-Cyr.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Thank you.

Mr. Audet, you talked about the processing phases, for immigrant investors, which start in Quebec City and then continue in Ottawa. I have often heard that this is a duplicate process. It would appear that the Quebec government already verifies the source of income and all the rest during its assessment. Ultimately, much of the process related to the security check is apparently duplicated.

Is this something you see in the course of your duties? Do you believe that it would be possible to save time by not redoing the same job twice?

**Mr. Marc Audet:** There are two parts to your question.

In fact, unlike the other provinces with the Provincial Nominee Program, Quebec has a system with a good level of due diligence. I think that Quebec is doing an excellent job of selecting candidates. There are specialized business people, there are offices, namely in Hong Kong and Damascus where there are essentially business people. They travel around the world for interviews, and they are specialists. It is a good selection process, and I think that this is why, ultimately, the refusal rate for Quebec, once the permanent residence visa is issued, is currently around 3%. I think that Quebec ensures good due diligence, unlike the other provinces for which the refusal rates are much higher.



Now in terms of security, you understand that Quebec's hands are tied to some extent. It does not have the security tools needed, whereas the federal government has the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the RCMP, etc.

However, there could be better communication, by mutual agreement—this already exists, Quebec is already communicating better with federal officials abroad—to exchange information in the files and so on, to ensure that there is no duplication of effort. We talked about the medical exam and the security check. However, often, at the federal level, although the source of the \$800,000 has already been verified by Quebec, the thinking is that this is a security issue as well. That is why there is sometimes duplication.

I think that we, in Quebec, need to have the appropriate discussions with our federal government counterparts to demonstrate that the work has been done. This depends on the mission. We see that, in some missions, the wait times are much longer and there are many more applications. We need to speak up and say that there is a problem at a given mission and that changes need to be made.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** You said that, typically, after one year, immigrant investors receive their selection certificate from Quebec. Once they have that, I understand that 97% of the time, they are accepted and receive a permanent residence visa to be able to come and live in Canada.

Is there no way to speed this up? Could we not allow them, temporarily and immediately upon receipt of their selection certificate, to settle in Canada? Because if they have the legal documents, then they are not terrorists, they have nothing to hide and they have very good reasons to believe that they will ultimately be allowed to permanently settle here. Could we not speed up the process separating the two steps?

**Mr. Marc Audet:** It is a little difficult to speed up the process. In fact, we must ensure fairness for all immigrant classes in relation to security. That is important.

However, overall, immigrant investors are typically about 50 years old; they are not 30-year-old millionaires. As I mentioned in my conclusion earlier, 90% of these people are doing it for their children, not for themselves. They already have a whole network of contacts around the world. They are doing this to ensure a better education for their kids and give to them a North American base. At present, our problem with regard to the five-year wait time concerns kids who are 14 and 15 years old. Their parents enrol them in other schools, be it in the U.K., the U.S. or wherever. Once the kids put down roots in one country—through the education system—they never leave, they get married, etc. So, unwittingly, if the kids settle in London, the parents will follow.

We feel that if we cannot speed up the processing time with the needed manpower, society will have to find a way to try to make it easier for these young people to come here in one way or another, so that they are schooled here. Quebec has already taken steps in that direction, recently, under its new legislation equating a diploma with a CSQ. In other words, we are telling them that if they come to Quebec to study, they will be able to apply for their selection certificate, and then get it.

The federal government needs to work towards something similar to allow these young people to study in our universities and put down roots here. Then, the parents will follow, as will the heritage and all the rest. The kids are the means to the end. We need to think of second generation and not only the first.

• (1040)

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** You talked about investor mobility, and the possibility that investors will go elsewhere.

How does this actually work? Are people simultaneously applying to two or three countries? Are they shopping around? It cannot be easy, because it takes around \$400,000 per application. Once they get fed up, do they give up and go elsewhere?

**Mr. Marc Audet:** Many investors are like university students. When someone wants to go to university, they apply to three or four universities, such as York, McGill and Simon Fraser. You need to understand where these people are coming from. Our immigrant investors are not from Europe or the Americas; they are from Asia and the Middle East. Why? Because there are political or economic problems in their country. They do not meet the criteria to apply under another class either.

Why would these people invest \$400,000, when they could immigrate to Canada as a skilled worker? Because they do not meet the required criteria, they cannot get enough points because they are too old, do not speak the language or do not have the education. The program was created in 1985—it has existed since then—to attract these individuals. You would be surprised to see how many people are extremely well off.

There are two programs in the United States. Earlier, I mentioned a program requiring \$500,000; there is a \$1 million requirement under another. You would be surprised at the number of people investing \$1 million.

There is a program in the U.K. with a 750 000 £ requirement, and the whole process is completed in three months.

Anyone can travel by plane between Montreal and Vancouver. You can go business class, economy class or first class, but the fare is not the same. These are the choices these people have.

There are other countries. We are lucky to have the best program in terms of costs, finances, structure, benefits for these people and their children, unlike other countries around the world. I did a comparative study with other similar countries: Australia, New Zealand and the United States. What is currently killing us? The wait times. Obviously, if it is too fast, we will get a flood of applications. No, we will not get 25,000 applications per year, because the pool of investors is limited.

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

Ms. Chow, you are next for seven minutes.

[English]

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** When an investor submits \$400,000, what do most of the banks or your firm or others do in terms of assisting them in investing? Do they purchase buildings or condos?

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Audet:** The program is regulated by the federal government. In fact, there is no choice. Under this program, the \$400,000 is sent to the Receiver General of Canada. The money is transferred to a financial institution such as Desjardins or another bank. The \$400,000 is then redistributed to the participating provinces.

[English]

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Do they receive the funds after the application is approved?

**Mr. Marc Audet:** Yes.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Okay. Then they can't receive the funds during the application process.

**Mr. Marc Audet:** No, it's afterward.

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** If I may, in the federal program the \$400,000 is invested once a selection decision is done.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Right. Does that go to the Canada Revenue Agency?

**Mr. Marc Audet:** No, it goes to the Receiver General for Canada. After that, they will go back to CIC and they will split the money among the different participating provinces. We actually now have six provinces participating in the program, and they share the \$400,000 for five years. Each province does what it wants with the money during the five years. Each immigrant brings this kind of money. The greater the number of provinces participating in the program, the less money they will receive per investor. They need more investors. All of the participating provinces are pushing CIC to have more planned.

That's on the federal side. On the Quebec side, the money goes to Investissement Québec, and with it we support small and medium-sized companies in Quebec as part of a grant program.

• (1045)

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Other than the targets, is one of the problems the lack of resources overseas? I know that Hong Kong, for example, processes a lot of people. The majority of these investors are from that part of the world. Is it a matter of a SWAT team that would have three or four visa officers particularly in that office, for example, to clear up the backlog? Would that assist in this situation, aside from the targets and all that?

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** Before IRPA, there used to be business processing centres all over the world, and they specialized in business-type applications from investors and entrepreneurs. This is why one of our recommendations would be to look seriously at a centralized intake office within Canada that would have the expertise to do the front-end processing to be comfortable with the numbers. Then the rest could be done overseas.

**Mr. Marc Audet:** There used to be nine business immigration centres around the world with specialized people. Hong Kong is a good place because they do a lot of investor class applications. The problem is that in Accra or Pretoria or whatever, if the guys see an investor file like this, with all the financial statements, and they have another skills application file like this, that's a part too. They don't have any training or financial background. You have to know what a

financial statement is. You have to know what his benefit is, what his working capital is.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** In what year was the switch made from centralized intake?

**Mr. Marc Audet:** It was 2003.

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** As you know, IRPA came in, and under R11 there are designated areas that process your application based on your country of residence or citizenship. That was one of the reasons.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Right.

I noticed that the targets have not changed at all, really, but there seems to be fairly dramatic increase in the last two years. Can you tell us why that is the case? The number has almost doubled since 2004. Is it because more people are learning about the program?

**Mr. Marc Audet:** A couple of things happened. For example, we used to have the business provincial nominee program. It was cut last year, and some of those applicants switched to the Quebec or federal immigrant investor program.

You have some emerging countries too. As you know, China is by far the biggest provider, and they have a new millionaire every day. In China there are 500 immigration consultants promoting immigration. The first country they will promote is Canada. Those people cannot qualify under the selection grid because they don't speak any English or French, so their only solution is to apply through the investor class. If you check in the other categories, there are not so many Chinese.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** This is the last question. If we have increased the annual targets, shouldn't the targets really be more honest? I always thought the target was what was approved, so my jaw just dropped. I couldn't believe that in fact the target of 2,155 included the other half that were not accepted. Has that always been the case for the last—

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** Yes.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Okay, so even if I look at 2002, when the number is 1,234 as a target, 50% of them could have been withdrawn or were not approved.

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** FD basically means the file is closed when you're doing a final disposition, so the file is closed.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** So should the target really be more accurate to say that it is the number of people that have been approved?

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** Well, that's what Quebec has done; for 2009 they've set it to actual investments made and landings rather than that the file is closed.

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

Mr. Dykstra.

• (1050)

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to take a minute to apologize to witnesses. I won't get a chance to comment again, but the first panel of witnesses had Mr. Karygiannis making a comment that was completely unacceptable for both the individual who was sitting there, the department, the ministry, and quite frankly the government.

He actually apologized earlier in the year for a comment he made, and I took him at his word when he said he was going to learn from that experience and these type of comments weren't going to be made again. They were this morning, and I take his explanation as a half-hearted attempt to try to discard this. I personally won't accept that, because I don't think you have discarded it. As an individual, it's disappointing that you would do what you did.

You also made a comment that this continued to be something having to do with Africa, yet of the six countries that you include, you also include Port-au-Prince and Kingston, Jamaica. Those are not countries in Africa, so your comments are much wider than just toward one country and toward African people.

But hopefully getting back to more enlightening efforts that we're trying to make to actually build a better system, I apologize to you folks—

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Karygiannis.

Stop the clock, please.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** I think some of the responsibility for my frustration should be on Mr. Dykstra. This morning we had people in here who were supposed to give us information and we did not get the right information.

I did say “African source countries” and Port-au-Prince is an African source country.

**The Chair:** Okay, let's keep this thing moving.

Mr. Dykstra, would you proceed with what we're here today about, please?

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** I'll do my best, Mr. Chair.

Imran, you were very supportive of clause 6 of Bill C-50, the changes that we made to the immigration—

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** I was actually here last year and I was the only one I think at that time. I was the vice-chair of CSIC and we actually came in support of Bill C-50.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** I appreciate that. I wouldn't mind just getting your comments in regard to that.

I know previously the ADM spoke about the changes that the legislation actually allowed the ministry to implement. Do you have some further comments based on the fact that we've seen some time pass and obvious changes to the system have meant something, including the ability for us to list out, at least in 2008, the 38 specific occupations, such as specialist positions, crane operators, and university professors?

I know we're speaking about investors, but it certainly pushes us in the right direction in terms of where we're going. I just want to give you a chance to comment based on your support originally.

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** Unfortunately, I have no hard numbers with me. We're going to be back here on November 20 in a CIC

immigration practitioner meeting. We've asked the department for hard numbers regarding the CIO.

I can only comment that, overall, we have over 1,500 fellows who belong to CMI. We have a very robust community, and on the whole, the changes brought about in federal skilled worker processing have been positive.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** Thanks. I appreciate that.

I wanted to get a little more from you on the concept of the centralized intake office. It is something that we are beginning to work with and try to move forward. One of the issues we always face in this ministry is the ability to pay for increased services and where we are going to find those funds. You've done a pretty good job of providing detail as to how the office may get started and its purpose, so I wondered if you'd done a little bit of research as to how we might coordinate the financial accountability to make it happen.

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** We are actually preparing a more fulsome report for the committee. Unfortunately, it was only confirmed on Monday that we would be appearing on Thursday and speaking about these issues, so the best I could muster is my speaking notes. But we will be bringing something forward to the committee.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** I know Mr. Bevilacqua earlier asked about some additional reports in terms of focusing directly on this. I don't think his request is unreasonable, and perhaps this actually fits that strategy in terms of being able to assist us with some of those details.

• (1055)

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** Sure.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** Thank you. I'd like to turn over the rest of my time to Ms. Wong.

**Mrs. Alice Wong (Richmond, CPC):** I have two questions.

You mentioned China, both of you, that it is the fastest-growing source of our immigrants, actually not only in the investor class but in all classes. In fact, the government has just opened two trade commission offices, and four more will be opened very soon. Do you think these offices will also give the potential investors a better understanding of the actual economic situation, as well as business opportunities in Canada, and then also encourage them to come over as business investors?

**Mr. Marc Audet:** I don't think it is actually the mandate of any CIC office around the world to do promotion. Actually, we asked them a couple of times to come to us to explain and so on. It's more that each province will do that. Each province tries to attract immigrants on their own—such as Ontario and Vancouver—through their own strategies. But with the present inventory, I don't think they want to try to promote anything. They want to digest what they have for the moment, so that's the situation.

That's a part of my job, to promote the program. I'm promoting Quebec and the federal program. I go overseas and work with agents. That's part of our job, and I think we're doing so well that we create the backlog, because our model.... If you talk with people from America, from Homeland Security, for example, they are jealous of our system, our requirements and the benefits we can give and so on, as compared with their own program. I think they are working on some things to compete with us, because if we receive more or less 10,000 applications a year, as investors...actually last year, I think they received less than 1,000—I think 800—applications in America. There should be ten times that. They should receive 100,000 for their country, so there is something wrong.

That's the reason why I say we have to adjust, be ready for what is coming, because our real competitor is not only Quebec and federal together. No, we have to be together to compete with America.

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** In other words, we suffer because of our success, because of how popular our programs are, and how positively the government has been acting in order to facilitate new immigrants coming into Canada.

Now, earlier on—

**The Chair:** No, I'm afraid we're going to have to stop.

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** No time?

**The Chair:** No.

We've come to an end. We have a couple of minutes left to give to Ms. Mendes, but before we do, I want to be sure that the three critics and Mr. Dykstra, as the parliamentary secretary, will meet at their discretion and one of the four of you will inform the chair what you want at future meetings.

Ms. Mendes, you have the floor for a question.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** A very quick question, yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

I want to come back to you, Mr. Audet.

Your table is extremely well done. I assume that you got it from Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

**Mr. Marc Audet:** It comes from their Web site.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** In the skilled worker category, the rate is -18% as compared with 2005.

Do you know why that is? We had implemented Bill C-50, which was supposed to speed up the process for skilled workers.

**Mr. Marc Audet:** Unfortunately, that is not my area of expertise. I specialize in immigrant investors. Imran might be able to address that.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** Do you have data on the entrepreneur category?

**Mr. Marc Audet:** Entrepreneurs fall under a program that is being phased out.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** Yes, I see that.

**Mr. Marc Audet:** We have statistics on investors.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** Why is the entrepreneur program being phased out?

**Mr. Marc Audet:** Because it is very difficult to meet the criteria. These people come here and have to start a business. They are coming to a new country. We, Canadians, have difficulty starting a business. Imagine what it's like for somebody who comes from abroad and who does not know how our legislation or accounting system works. They are completely in the dark. It is extremely difficult.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** I do not know whether Mr. Qayyum—  
[*English*]

Mr. Qayyum, do you have an explanation why 18% fewer skilled workers are being admitted compared to 2005?

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** I'm not familiar with the numbers you're looking at, Ms. Mendes.

• (1100)

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** They are CIC numbers. I was just asking if you knew about them.

**Mr. Imran Qayyum:** I don't believe any Bill C-50 numbers have been published yet because it's still too early. When we're back here on November 20 we will be meeting with CIC, and we've asked them for processing.

I can tell you that we recently visited the regional program centre in Buffalo, New York. We were able to see the way the files are scheduled. They were just about to start Bill C-50, so things will be moving along.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:** So we don't have the numbers yet.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I think we'll conclude the questions.

Mr. Qayyum and Mr. Audet, thank you for coming and making your presentations to the committee.

Mr. Qayyum, you indicated you may have further written material. If you could make that available to the clerk, he will have it translated into English and French.

Mr. Audet, the same applies to you.

On behalf of the committee, I thank you very much for coming.

The chair also notes that the way the questions are going, the government is not being treated the same as everyone else. I ask all of you to think about what is fair for all members of the committee.

This meeting is adjourned.







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