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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, November 15, 2011**

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**Chair**

**Mr. David Tilson**



## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Tuesday, November 15, 2011

•(1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)):** Good morning, everyone. This is the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, meeting number 9, on Tuesday, November 15, 2011.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this is the study of the immigration application backlogs in light of the action plan for faster immigration.

We have three witnesses this morning from our missions abroad. We also have Ms. Sharon Chomyn, who is the director general of the international region in Ottawa. I understand her purpose here is to introduce the witnesses, one of whom is speaking from India, one from Pakistan, and one from the Philippines.

Each of the three speakers will have up to eight minutes to speak and then there will be questions from members of the committee. I suppose it's fair if you feel you can make a contribution as well, Ms. Chomyn, but that would be part of the time I've spoken of.

Welcome to the committee, Ms. Chomyn. I'm going to ask you to help us with these backlogs issues and to introduce your colleagues, please.

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn (Director General, International Region, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

What I'd like to do, if you'll permit me, is to make a few opening remarks, and then I'll be happy to turn the floor over to my colleagues and introduce them at that time.

**The Chair:** Just so we're clear, I have no problem. We're here to hear the three witnesses, so there would be a total of 24 minutes for all of you.

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** Understood. Thank you.

Thank you for the invitation to appear before you today. In addressing the plan for faster immigration, I'd like to speak on the impact of the action plan on our network abroad.

First allow me to provide you with a few numbers on achieving this year's immigration plan, which was tabled in Parliament last fall. As you may know, our network abroad contributes 85% of admissions, with issuance of visas in all three streams: economic, family, and protected persons. By the end of October we were on track, having issued 83% of the visas for this year. We fully expect to be within one or two percent of our visa levels by the end of December.

In relation to the action plan for faster immigration, I wish to address two issues. These are establishing priorities in processing, and opportunities presented with modernization.

With respect to establishing priorities in processing,

•(1105)

[Translation]

visa targets or objectives are assigned to missions in consideration of the annual levels presented to Parliament, the projected intake of new applications, the number of applications in process, the capacity throughout the network abroad, the service standards, the number of temporary residence applications to be processed, as well as political stability and natural disasters abroad.

[English]

Until recent years priority processing for missions normally meant family class priorities—that is, spouses and dependent children, and protected persons. Federal skilled workers and other categories in the economic streams were processed on a first-in, first-out basis. Since the implementation of the action plan for faster immigration, priority processing now also exists within the category of federal skilled workers.

As you know, ministerial instructions were developed to reduce inventories and backlogs, to improve processing times, and to respond to labour market needs in a punctual manner.

In addition to priorities for permanent residents, missions must at the same time give priority processing to temporary resident applicants, such as business visitors, tourists, temporary workers, and students. Added to the challenge of managing a large number of priorities at the same time, missions must make additional adjustments for seasonal influxes and for staff changeovers, which usually occur during the very busy summer months.

[Translation]

Additionally, policy or program changes may be added to the mix. You will recall the minister's announcements a few weeks ago on the Action Plan for Faster Family Reunification. While the department will not take in new applications for parents and grandparents, we are committed to issuing a higher number of visas this year to reduce the inventory faster than normal levels of issuance would allow.

[English]

In regard to opportunities, with intake caps in the federal skilled workers stream, we will eventually have more manageable inventories globally, which will give us improved processing times.

In addition, in the context of increasing demand for our services and limited resources, we have turned our minds to efficiencies and service improvements through modernization. The implementation of our global case management system, which we refer to as GCMS, coupled with streamlining initiatives—e.g., the use of visa application centres, the rationalization of our application forms, and the use of 2D bar-coded applications—allow us to work much more efficiently. This will help us to improve on processing times, and this is good news for our clients.

Now I will turn it over to my colleagues in New Delhi. Mr. Frank is currently in Islamabad on an area visit. In Chandigarh is Ms. Zadravetz. And in Manila is Mr. Kent Francis. They will provide you with their perspectives on managing the action plan.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Zadravetz.

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz (Immigration Program Manager, Chandigarh, India, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to the committee for inviting me to speak.

My name is Lillian Zadravetz, and I am the program manager of the Chandigarh visa office. I would like to provide a short overview of Chandigarh's operations.

[Translation]

The Chandigarh visa office is a satellite office, processing temporary resident applications only—visitors, students and temporary workers, primarily...

[English]

**The Chair:** Excuse me. We seem to have a technical problem.

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz:** I'm hearing the translation while I'm speaking.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC):** What's happening is two of our presenters are presenting at the same time. He's speaking while she is. Even though she has the mike, you can hear him in the background.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. Perhaps that was my fault. I thought we were clear.

The first speaker is Ms. Zadravetz. The other two speakers need to wait until she's finished.

•(1110)

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz:** No. It's the translation that I'm hearing while I'm speaking.

**The Chair:** I thought things were perfect here. That's why we're here at One Wellington instead of Centre Block. They're not perfect.

We're going to try this again. I apologize for interrupting.

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz:** That's all right.

**The Chair:** I hope the colleagues on the committee will be able to understand what you're saying. We seem to be having some technical difficulties. We're going to do our best to help you.

You can proceed.

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz:** Do I pick up where I left off?

**The Chair:** Yes, please.

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz:** I'll finish my French.

[Translation]

Two visa application centres, in Chandigarh and Jalandhar, facilitate the handling of temporary resident applications. The vast majority of our applicants choose to use these centres.

[English]

The visa office in Chandigarh opened in 2004. It's currently staffed by five Canada-based officers and 18 locally engaged staff, supplemented in the summer by Canada-based temporary duty officers.

Our visitor, study, and work permit programs have grown rapidly since the office opened, with the total number of applications doubling since 2004. In 2010, we received close to 35,000 applications, of which 20,000 were visitor applications, almost 13,000 were study permit applications, and over 1,000 were work permit applications. There were also over 1,000 applications for permanent resident travel documents.

The summer peak period for visitor applications coincides with student applications for the September semester and also with the kabaddi program. So even with temporary duty over the summer, it is a challenge for Chandigarh to cope with the volumes over this period. On the other hand, Chandigarh is now increasingly issuing longer-term multiple-entry visas for frequent visitors, which will be more convenient for the clients and will lessen the processing burden on Chandigarh.

The kabaddi and religious worker programs we have in Chandigarh, which are important to the Punjabi community in Canada, require more processing steps and monitoring, thus requiring more resources. In 2011 we received approximately 1,600 applications from religious workers. The number of kabaddi applications in 2011 was 800, doubling last year's number and quadrupling levels from 2008 and 2009. We are working with the gurdwaras and the sports clubs to improve the process, but there are still some issues to be resolved.

To improve efficiency and processing times, we are continually looking for ways to streamline processing. But we are also operating in a high-risk environment where fraud is endemic. Confirmed and suspected fraud is encountered in a high number of cases and in all business lines, that is, those involving visitors, students, and workers. We must factor this fact into our risk management in order to protect the integrity of our programs.

Despite the economic growth in India, push factors from the Punjab are strong. Unscrupulous consultants play on this and actively dupe people into submitting applications with fraudulent documentation. There have even been fake visa officers who have visited villages and posed as consulate staff. Happily, law enforcement authorities in the Punjab are increasingly taking action against such fraudulent activities, and a few consultants have recently been arrested.

I would just like to add that the approval rate for Chandigarh's visitor applications has been slowly increasing to a current average of around 50%.

This is just a quick summary of Chandigarh's operations, but I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Zdravetz, for your contribution.

After we hear the other two speakers, I know there will be questions from members of the committee.

Sidney Frank, who is the immigration program manager of New Delhi, is speaking to us from Pakistan.

You're on the air, sir. You can proceed with your presentation.

•(1115)

**Mr. Sidney Frank (Immigration Program Manager, New Delhi, India, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** That's great. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the committee for inviting me to speak. My name is Sidney Frank, and I am the program manager of the New Delhi visa office and area director for South Asia.

I would like to provide a short overview, emphasizing topics that I understand are of most interest to the committee.

[*Translation*]

New Delhi is Canada's largest visa office, with over 150 staff. We are responsible for delivery of the immigration program in India, Nepal and Bhutan. A satellite office in Chandigarh processes temporary residence applications, primarily from the states of Punjab and Haryana.

We operate a network of visa application centres in nine major Indian cities and in Nepal to make the application process more convenient for private visitors, tourists, business travellers, students and temporary workers.

[*English*]

I am certain that you are aware that in spite of the current worldwide economic downturn, India's economy continues to grow rapidly. Consequently, our visitor, study permit, and work permit programs have grown very rapidly in the past decade. They have roughly tripled in size. This pattern continued in 2010, with an increase of about 20% over 2009 volumes.

New Delhi assessed over 96,000 temporary resident applications in 2010, and it receives over 1,500 passports on peak days. Nevertheless, we are able to maintain our processing standards on all temporary resident business lines at all times.

A significant portion of the Indian population has not benefited from economic growth. As a result, strong push factors for migration remain, and fraud and misrepresentation are widespread. In spite of high levels of fraud, roughly 75% of our temporary resident visa applications are approved.

We also have several innovative programs through which we work closely with stakeholders to facilitate documentation for low-risk travellers. For example, our business express program, in cooperation with about 55 large and reliable firms that do regular business in Canada, provides simplified documentation and 24- to 48-hour processing. It has an approval rate of over 98%.

Our student partners program, inaugurated in 2009, and now with 43 participating community colleges, has succeeded in improving approval rates and in quadrupling application volumes while managing risk through stricter documentation and feedback on actual attendance.

In each of our temporary resident business lines, processing times are falling. For example, 92% of all visitor visa applications are finalized within one week, and a growing number are done within two days.

India has been Canada's second-largest source of permanent residents in recent years. New Delhi issued over 25,000 permanent resident visas last year.

New Delhi has by far Canada's largest number of family class program applicants and also the largest inventory of economic category applications. They issue about 20% of the global family class visas each year.

In our priority category—spouses and dependent children—we finalize 80% of cases within six months. The median is three months. Although marriages of convenience are common, the large majority of marriages are genuine. About 82% are normally approved.

In the parents and grandparents category, output is managed globally. We process a sufficient number of cases each year to meet the objective assigned to the office. Current processing time at the visa office is 31 months, but this does not include sponsorship processing time at the case processing centre in Mississauga.

For sponsored parents and grandparents, the primary difficulty relates to the misrepresentation of dependent children. Many families provide fraudulent documentation showing that children are still full-time students, or they add unrelated children to their applications. As applicants are generally elderly, these cases are also frequently delayed by complex medical conditions.

New Delhi had the largest inventory of skilled worker cases submitted prior to the ministerial instructions pursuant to Bill C-50. In 2008-09 significant progress was made in reducing the pre-2008 inventory of over 140,000 persons to the 119,500 persons there are today, which is a decrease of 15%. The processing time for these cases continues to lengthen. It was 79 months in 2010.

Due to the large number of new cases submitted under ministerial instructions, we processed few old inventory cases in 2010. At the present time we are devoting all available resources to the quick processing of new cases received under the second and third set of ministerial instructions. In 2010 we finalized 80% of all these cases within 10 months.

New Delhi issued over 11,900 skilled worker visas in 2010, which was an increase from about 8,400 in 2009.

• (1120)

I would also note that New Delhi is quickly becoming one of the major source countries for provincial nominee programs. This program was small in India until recently, but tripled in size between 2008 and 2010.

The federal investor program was very small in Delhi in the past, with few applications prior to 2007. Intake has increased significantly in the past two years. In 2010 we finalized 80% of cases within 28 months.

I wish to assure you that the team in India is committed to the expeditious processing of all types of cases and is working hard to advance Canada's interests in India.

I also would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.

Thank you.

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

Our final presenter, speaking from Manila, in the Philippines, is Mr. Kent Francis, who is the immigration program manager.

Welcome to the committee, sir.

**Mr. Kent Francis (Acting Immigration Program Manager, Manila, Philippines, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm honoured to be here.

**The Chair:** Please proceed with your presentation, sir. Thank you.

**Mr. Kent Francis:** My name is Kent Francis and I'm the acting immigration program manager in Manila.

I understand the committee is studying the immigration application backlog in light of the action plan for faster immigration. I will therefore provide you information on this in the context of Manila's operations.

[*Translation*]

Manila is a large centre for both permanent and temporary migration. Our office currently consists of 17 Canada-based officers, including a medical officer and migration integrity officer, and 77 locally engaged staff. It covers a large territory of Pacific islands,

although the vast majority of the applications we receive are from the Philippines.

[*English*]

To give you an idea of the size of our program and to provide some context, on the temporary side we receive some 30,000 temporary resident applications per year. We also receive a large number of temporary foreign worker applications each year, but this number tends to fluctuate with the health of the Canadian economy. For example, in 2008, Manila received almost 29,000 temporary foreign worker applications but the number dropped by half the following year, and further in 2010. The 2009-2010 drop allowed us to reduce our inventory and processing time significantly.

We also have a sizeable live-in caregiver program and are making significant inroads in reducing inventories and processing times in that category.

With respect to permanent migration, we issued more than 27,000 permanent resident visas last year and will issue between 25,000 and 26,000 permanent resident visas this year. Of note is the large increase in the provincial nominee program in Manila over the last few years. Almost 10,000 visas were issued in that category in 2010. For 2011 we will issue more than 10,000 visas, the vast majority processed in less than a year.

Manila also has a large federal skilled worker program. We have been able to process the majority of our skilled worker applications received after July 2010, the so-called C-50 MI-2 cases, and have also processed many of our C-50 MI-1 cases, but only a few of our pre-C-50 inventory. We continue to have a large inventory and we are working to reduce it.

Our economic immigrant programs such as provincial nominees and federal skilled workers will account for about 15,000 permanent resident visas this year. The remaining visas will come from dependents of live-in caregivers and family class.

Manila sees a large and increasing number of applications from dependent family members of live-in caregivers in Canada. For the second year in a row, we issued 6,000 visas in that category in 2010 and will do so again this year. In the family class category, we issued more than 4,000 visas in 2010, and processing times for family class priority cases—spouses, partners, and children—remain within the departmental service standards.

As we moved from the older CAIPS system to GCMS to process cases, we looked at each step to determine if there were ways to cut time and if there were steps that could be eliminated altogether, for low-risk cases. We have made changes that allow some cases to be processed in a matter of a few months. We also took the opportunity to clean up our older inventory. For parents and grandparents and other family class applications, we expect to issue more than 900 visas this year but will continue to have a large inventory, and our processing times are about two and a half years. We continue to recognize the inconvenience this may cause and show flexibility by issuing visitor visas to parents and grandparents who are waiting for their immigrant application to be finalized.

While there is fraud in the Manila immigration program, it is not as prevalent as in other programs. Nevertheless, Manila continues to conduct quality assurance and anti-fraud exercises to detect fraud and reduce our risk. There are, however, challenges that are particular to Manila. For example, communication outside major urban centres is sometimes not reliable. This is particularly true for the postal service to rural areas. There are also other factors that help Manila process applications in a timely manner, including the fact that the majority of our applicants are from the Philippines and can easily travel to Manila for an interview if required.

In closing, Mr. Chair, Manila is in a good position to deliver on its commitment again this year and to further reduce processing times in key categories. However, in a program as large as Manila's with important fluctuations in some categories and the support we provide to other missions in our area, we need to always be prepared to prioritize and reallocate resources as needed and to constantly review our internal procedures to find more efficiencies and to provide better service to our clients, and that is what we're doing.

For example, as part of our efforts at the local level, we have implemented several changes as a result of the global case management system and the suite of electronic services we have, which are beginning to have a positive impact on our work.

• (1125)

Manila has had GCMS for almost a year now, and we already see gains in terms of processing efficiencies, redistribution of work, and tracking of cases. We have leveraged its capabilities so we can better manage our permanent resident cases by immigrant category and processing stage.

We have learned and developed these techniques and shared them with other offices through the CIC Wiki, and we have also benefited from lessons learned and best practices of other offices, such as the one in New Delhi.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much to all of you.

We're now going to proceed with questions from the committee. The first member of the committee who wishes to address you is John Weston, who is with the government.

Mr. Weston.

[Translation]

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all our guests today.

I think that all Canadians are particularly proud of our Department of Citizenship and Immigration. The results you've reported today are outstanding. The application rate is enormous.

I have some relevant experience. Twenty years ago, I worked for the Canadian Trade Office in Taipei. I know what pressure is on you when you work abroad. So we salute you and congratulate you on this marvellous job.

I have a few questions about applications that you raised. The first one is about fraud.

Ms. Zdravetz and Mr. Frank, you said that there was a considerable amount of fraud. Can you say how many files are affected by fraud?

• (1130)

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Zdravetz is first, please.

**Ms. Lillian Zdravetz:** Thank you.

There is one way of counting fraud, and that is the number of applicants we find inadmissible because of confirmed frauds. We find them inadmissible for two years because of the fraud that was committed.

Last year we had 654 such applications, where we discovered and verified fraud. We offer the applicants the opportunity to respond to those concerns. If they respond, then we assess the response and make our determination. That is a long process, especially when we're giving the applicant time to respond. We give them 30 days.

It is something that we do, but I would say that we don't do it in every single case. If we find highly suspect documents, and there are other reasons that we would not be satisfied that the applicant meets our requirements or is inadmissible, we may simply refuse.

We don't have numbers for those cases. The figure of 654 is a firm number, but I would say we have discovered fraud in a number of other cases but did not go to that length to find the person inadmissible.

[Translation]

**Mr. John Weston:** Mr. Frank, can you give me a short answer, please?

**Mr. Sidney Frank:** The majority of applications refused by us, especially those for temporary resident visas, involve fraud or false statements. As Ms. Zdravetz explained, we can refuse applications under section 40 of the act. We don't do that all the time, especially during the high season. However, it's true that people are going to make false statements to give us the impression that they're working at a certain place, although they aren't working, that they've completed certain studies that they haven't really done, or that they have money in a certain bank account, which in fact doesn't exist. This practice is very widespread among many of the applications we refuse.

**Mr. John Weston:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** You have less than two minutes, Mr. Weston.

[Translation]

**Mr. John Weston:** Thank you.

On a somewhat more positive note, our Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, has done a lot of work and met lots of people. Two weeks ago, he announced the creation of the

• (1135)

[English]

parents and grandparents super visa, which I suspect you've heard about. It will provide a 10-year multi-entry visa to encourage people to apply for temporary visas, as opposed to permanent residence. This is the most generous visa offered in our immigration system, I'm told.

Can you tell us how this might affect processing times, please?

Let's start with Mr. Francis.

**Mr. Kent Francis:** The super visa is something we look forward to. In some respects we've already been doing something similar with our parents and grandparents, because we recognize that our processing times are long. We're hoping that over the next year, as we get into more and more of our parents and grandparents cases, we'll be able to reduce our processing times even further as we deal with more and more of our inventory.

It is my understanding that the super visa, as it stands right now, will apply to those parents who are currently in the queue, or those who could be sponsored at some later date.

One of the things we have encountered in the Philippines is that many of our parents and grandparents do not actually stay a long time in Canada, and we encounter them when they apply for permanent resident travel documents. So the super visa may discourage them from applying because they wish to be long-term visitors, as opposed to permanent residents. We think it may have a positive impact by taking some of the pressure off the category as it currently exists.

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

I'm sorry, Mr. Weston, we're out of time.

We will proceed with Mr. Davies, who represents the New Democratic Party caucus.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to pick up on the issue of the so-called super visa, so we can understand how this might play out.

I understand that Canada has had a five-year multiple-entry visa for years. Is that your understanding?

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. Don Davies:** How long have we had five-year multiple-entry visas?

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** I've been in the business for over 20 years, and we've had them that entire time.

**Mr. Don Davies:** I have a press release from CIC dated July 20 announcing a new 10-year multiple-entry visa. So CIC created a 10-year multiple-entry visa to coincide with the extension of the passports of many countries from five years to 10 years this past July. Is that correct?

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** That reflects the fact that some passports are valid for 10 years.

**Mr. Don Davies:** In this press release it says that this practice, already recommended for parents and grandparents with sponsorships in process, may now be extended to other clientele, such as business visitors.

So it's true that the 10-year multiple-entry visa was created in July. Is that right?

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** It was rolled out in July, yes.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Thanks.

It says we receive some 30,000 temporary resident visa applications per year in Manila. Chandigarh says there were 20,000 visitor applications. In the presentation it says that Chandigarh is now increasingly issuing longer term multiple-entry visas.

Can Chandigarh or Manila tell me how many five-year multiple-entry visas you have issued a year over the previous 10 years? I know you probably don't have the figure at your fingertips, but give us a general idea of how many you have issued every year.

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz:** The office in Chandigarh opened in 2004, so we can't go back 10 years. I would not be able to give you a figure at all. I would have to see if we could get those numbers. I'm not really sure.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Could you please forward those numbers to the committee for each year since 2004, how many five-year multiple-entry visas you've issued annually?

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz:** I'll see if that information is even available. It was in a different system. We can look into it, but I don't know whether that information is easily obtainable, about how many we've issued.

**Mr. Don Davies:** If you could, send it to the clerk.

You don't know if you have the number of five-year multiple-entry visas your office has issued annually since 2004?

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz:** No. I'll have to inquire whether there is a way to run that. I just don't know whether we can. If we can do it, we'll send the information.

• (1140)

**Mr. Don Davies:** Thank you.

In Manila, do you know how many five-year multiple-entry visas you've issued over the last 10 years on average?

**Mr. Kent Francis:** Again, we have the same technical problems. The system that we would use to run that, called CAIPS, is antiquated and may not necessarily be able to produce that information.



One of the things you have to bear in mind in terms of the multiple-entry visa is that the cost-recovery fees that are payable differ for a single-entry visa versus a multiple-entry visa, and we find many of our parents and grandparents applying for only a single-entry visa.

**Mr. Don Davies:** What I'm trying to figure out is if 10-year multiple-entry visas are...if we have any hope that those will actually help in the backlog, particularly with parents and grandparents. We've had five-year and 10-year visas for years now, so why haven't the presence and issuance of those visas assisted in helping avoid the backlog? My sense—and this is anecdotal—is that it's because they're not issued very often. My concern is that if we don't change the criteria that are applied in embassies such as yours so that we actually grant the multiple-entry visas, then they're not going to be of much assistance. The supposition I'll put to you, through my experience and I think that of many MPs, is that there are not very many five-year multiple-entry visas issued at all.

I'm just wondering if there is a problem there that we can deal with to make the criteria easier so that people can actually get them.

**Mr. Kent Francis:** Our policy in Manila right now is that every person who applies for a multiple-entry visa is given the maximum ability possible according to their passport. That's been our policy over at least the last year, and we've been doing that on a regular basis.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Also, just to turn to resources, do you each feel that you have sufficient resources in your offices to process the applications that you receive for permanent residency?

Chandigarh, New Delhi, or Manila—whoever wants to answer.

**Mr. Sidney Frank:** This is Sid Frank in New Delhi.

In terms of permanent-resident visas, we are assigned targets for the year that are based on the resources we have; our issuance of visas is not based on our intake for the year. So I would say that yes, we do have the resources to handle the visa targets that we're assigned by the international region of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

**The Chair:** Ms. Chomyn, do you have something to add?

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** Yes, I just want to build on the information my colleagues have already provided.

You are correct that there was an ability to issue a five-year multiple-entry visa, but until recently, what officers tended to do as a first response was to issue a single entry, if that was what was preferred by the client. If the client advised that they wished to have a visa for a two- or a three-year period, that's what was done, rather than issuing it for five years. There was a limitation on the validity of the visa that was dictated by the validity of the passport, and there may have been other issues that came into play as well.

So yes, it was possible to do it. Was it done frequently? Probably not. But we certainly have provided instructions to missions, as of July certainly, and that will go with the 10-year multiple-entry visa for parents and grandparents, that they are to assess applications with a facilitative point of mind and issue visas for the longest duration possible—again, limited by the validity of the passport.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Davies, time has expired.

Mr. Lamoureux, who represents the Liberal Party caucus, is next.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** You have to excuse me. I only have five minutes, so I'm going to try to go through three points, and then ask if somehow among the four of us we can limit it to five minutes.

First, in regard to the whole super visa and the multi-year visa, I think it's important that we recognize right up front that there is a fear factor that many people from the Philippines and from India have. It is that if they have a son or daughter in Canada, the chances of their not being given the required visa is pretty good, is pretty high. So the fear factor is why would they even bother to apply for a multiple-year visa, for the simple reason that there's a better chance they will get approved for the single one-year visa or six-month visa?

That's something on which I would challenge our embassies abroad. They have to try to better make those visas available. That's what we're starting to hear from my NDP critic. It's one thing to have them; it's another thing to allow people to have access to them. I want to make that particular point in regard to the five-year and the multiple visas, and they can provide comments on that, in particular the Philippines and Chandigarh.

Mr. Francis, you made reference to the students who are no longer dependants. Because of processing times, we have applicants in the parents and grandparents classes who have a dependant, but because they're in processing for six years, the number of students starts to drop. They are no longer dependants. Do you have any statistical numbers that would tell us how many students are actually being lost because of the lengthy processing times? If you don't have that answer, maybe you could provide it to the clerk at some point in time.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that we had both India and the Philippines make reference to the provincial nominee program. India said that it has quadrupled, I believe—quadrupled or tripled. There have been huge increases from both countries; that's the bottom line. I think we're going to see potentially longer processing times, or there's going to be an issue with backlogs coming to the provincial nominee program. I would ask if you could speak to that.

That's it for me. Please try to keep your comments short on all three points.

Maybe we can start with Manila.

• (1145)

**Mr. Kent Francis:** I'll address your question on the provincial nominees.

We've been able to keep our processing times to under a year, and we expect to be able to do the same over this coming year. As I've indicated, we found many ways we can manage the risks of that program. We know where we want to concentrate our efforts, and that's what we've been doing, concentrating on those key points that we find most relevant to making our decision. Through that, we are able to maintain our processing times at less than 12 months.

**The Chair:** Does anyone have a comment?

Mr. Frank.

**Mr. Sidney Frank:** I could comment on the super visa for parents.

First of all, in my experience, the vast majority of parents who apply for visas to visit Canada do receive them. Parents visiting their children is not an area where we see a great deal of fraud. There's really an incentive for us to give a long multiple-entry visa to a parent. If we do that, they're going to apply for a visa fewer times. I can tell you we're definitely not looking for extra work; we're looking at reducing the work that we do. You may have had examples in the past where parents had difficulty obtaining multiple-entry visas. I think you're going to see those visas in our offices in the future.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Does that same principle apply there on the five-year multiple for Manila?

**Mr. Sidney Frank:** If you're asking Delhi, I'm saying we'll gladly give 10-year multiple-entry visas to parents.

There's another aspect of the super visa that I think is really important. Upon arrival in Canada, parents will be able to receive permission to stay in Canada for two years. That's a very big change. Previously, when you were in Canada for longer than six months, you had to apply for a visitor record through the case processing centre in Vegreville. This will make it much easier for parents. So a parent who has a 10-year multiple-entry visa can go to Canada, stay for 18 months, leave, spend six months back in the Punjab, then go back to Canada, and stay another 12 months. We think this will be a huge change for them.

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

Ms. Chomyn, I'm sorry, we're out of time.

We're back to the Conservatives. Mr. Opitz and Mr. Leung.

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll start with Ms. Zadravetz. In your area, what are some of the reasons you have found to deny temporary residence visas?

• (1150)

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz:** We did mention the fraud already, or we're not satisfied that the person is a genuine visitor—either they're not well established or have insufficient funds. There are a number of different reasons to refuse students and workers. If it's just the visitors you're concerned about, it's usually whether they're well established in India or whether they have the funds to travel to Canada and come back.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** Would you know how many incomplete applications you receive, on average?

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz:** For incomplete applications, I would say that we don't get incomplete applications, because the vast majority are submitted through the visitor applications centre, and they make sure they're all complete before they reach us.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** Good stuff.

Ms. Chomyn, Canada's current immigration system, which was created in 2002, as you know, legally requires the government to process every application, even if the applications outnumber the number of people we can welcome every year.

In your opinion, does this system make sense, that the government must process every single application it receives, regardless of how high that number is? Can we manage the intake of those applications?

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** The ministerial instructions that were initiated in 2008 as a result of a regulatory change now make it possible to prioritize applications within certain categories for processing. That, for example, is why we're able to process applications received in 2008 under the MI-1 instructions in priority over applications that may have been submitted earlier on that are in the backlog.

Does it make sense? That's what our instructions are, and that's what we do.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** In your opinion, how would you improve the system?

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** How would I improve it?

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** Do you have recommendations?

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** I think we have made a great step forward in controlling the intake of applications. Backlogs develop when input exceeds output. Output is controlled by the Government of Canada and by Parliament and is a reflection of not only our capacity to process applications but also the capacity of Canada to receive and integrate new immigrants.

There is a control at that end. When you have no control over the intake, you're looking for a collision to happen in between. Unfortunately, that's where our backlogs have come from.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** On the super visa, would you agree that the super visa provides a lot of flexibility and is in fact a satisfier for clients?

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** My personal view is that I think if people choose to take advantage of this visa—we certainly will be encouraging them to do that—it will provide quite a bit of relief in the category of parents and grandparents. We are all parts of families, and we all understand that we want to have family members with us at certain points of time in our lives. We would like to be able to have them visit. We would like them to stay longer or shorter. I think that this particular instrument will provide a great deal of flexibility.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** What are some of the things that you find—this could be addressed to anybody—that bottleneck the system for you? What are certain things that affect processing times that you would like to eliminate if you could?

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** Perhaps I can start off, and one of my colleagues could continue.

An unpredictable influx of applications can create bottlenecks. There can be a natural disaster—for example, an earthquake in Haiti—that can create a bottleneck. There can be unexpected problems with technology that can create a bottleneck. There can be variations. There can be the activities of fraudulent consultants who can flood us with applications that are particularly problematic and take longer than normal efforts to process. There are also others.

Perhaps I'll hand it over to one of my overseas colleagues to continue.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** Mr. Francis, perhaps.

**Mr. Kent Francis:** One of the bottlenecks that we encounter here in the Philippines, as I have mentioned in my opening remarks, is that sometimes there are simple problems communicating with clients. The mail service can be unreliable, and we notice this particularly with some of our parents and grandparents when we ask them to undergo medical examinations, for instance. We send a follow-up to them, and they do not receive and have not received the original medical instructions. That creates a bottleneck. Often, as is the case with parents and grandparents, they're not in as good health as the rest of the population. They tend to take a little longer to clear their medical. Again, that creates a bottleneck.

• (1155)

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** I think I'll pass the rest of the time to Mr. Leung.

**Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC):** Thank you.

My question primarily has to do with flexibility in our staffing. We know that when the output is limited, and we cannot control the input, a bottleneck is created in the throughput. I'm impressed by the staggering amount of applications that we process. If the output changes, either by increasing or decreasing, how much does the post in New Delhi or Manila have to ramp up to meet those demands? Is there a long processing time after a particular disaster to meet that heavier demand for output? Is it a month or two months? Do we have people on standby to ramp up?

Ms. Chomyn?

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** This is something that we control from headquarters. There is a portion of the budget that's set aside every year for temporary duty assignments. These are officers we send overseas for a period of several weeks at a time, as opposed to officers who are stationed overseas for years at a time. We expect that there are going to be shortfalls. People get sick, people have to be away from the mission, and we are prepared to send temporary duty in for those types of situations.

There are other situations where volumes grow beyond the capacity of the mission to process, and we monitor this proactively from headquarters, keeping track of what's coming in and what's going out. We have a process that runs on a quarterly cycle. Program managers are able to flag to us things that may affect their ability to process all the applications that are being submitted. We have a management group that meets at least quarterly to review those requests, and we also proactively contact managers when we're able to see from our own analysis at headquarters that backlogs may be forming. In this case, we decide as a management group how to address those issues through temporary duty.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madame Groguhé.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your information.

My question is about the government's announcement concerning the super visa for parents and grandparents, which will allow multiple visits. This super visa is worrisome, though, since it will have requirements attached to it, including the obligation to have

health insurance and to have a minimum income. Some people, of which I am one, think that these requirements are going to create a two-tier system.

Could you give me your opinion on this? Also, what was the reaction in your respective communities?

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Chomyn.

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** I'm not a policy-maker. I represent a group that delivers policy as it's designed by the department and on the instructions of the minister.

The eligibility requirements set out for this visa include the ability on the part of the sponsor or the host to support a parent, and the requirement that medical insurance be there. These issues reflect a balance between a desire to facilitate visits to Canada of parents and grandparents for longer periods and perhaps more frequently than had been possible in the past, and the interests of Canadian taxpayers, who perhaps feel some of the pressure of obtaining health care for their own family members. It seems to be a balance that was achieved through discussions with various stakeholders.

I'm a little concerned that there seems to be a belief that missions might use this type of instrument sparingly. I would like to assure the members of this committee that our instructions to missions are to facilitate the issuance of this type of visa. We will be monitoring this from headquarters and if necessary reinforcing instructions to ensure that the minister's wishes are carried out as he's expressed them.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** We're probably getting into an area that's bordering on policy, in which case the question should be directed to the minister, if and when he comes, but you may proceed. I simply caution you that some of the questions you're asking are policy, and it's unfair to ask these witnesses.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé:** I have a second question.

You all talked about shorter processing times by the provincial programs. I would like to know about the improvements that have been made. Could improvements not be made in the processing of applications in other categories? Is it possible to envisage this? If so, in what way?

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, we need someone to say something. Who's my fall-back?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé:** Mr.—

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Zadravetz, do you have any comments?

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz:** We only do temporary, not permanent, so the provincial nominee program doesn't really apply to Chandigarh, but it would to Delhi.

**The Chair:** Ms. Chomyn.

**Ms. Sharon Chomyn:** Thank you.

I'm monopolizing everyone's time today, and I apologize for that, but I'd like to answer your question.

The department is actually in the middle of a major modernization process in which we're looking at the technology that we use to process applications. We're looking at the policies behind the programs. We're looking at the resources and how they're allocated. We're looking at the introduction of new initiatives such as the visa application centres that replace our front counters. We're looking at our applications, which in some cases now have to be filled out by hand using paper. We're hoping to turn all of those processes into electronic processes by introducing the concept of e-payments, plus other initiatives that for all of our business lines will make the experience, hopefully, more comfortable and faster. And with initiatives such as visas being valid for a longer period, we hope they'll have to interact with us less often while still being able to visit Canada as they wish to and need to.

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

That concludes our time with the four of you this morning.

I'd like to thank you, Ms. Chomyn, Ms. Zadravetz, Mr. Frank, and Mr. Francis. I have no idea what time it is over there. I'm sure it's an awful hour. On behalf of the committee, I thank you.

What time is it over there, Ms. Zadravetz?

**Ms. Lillian Zadravetz:** It's 10:30 in the evening.

**The Chair:** Oh dear. Well, I hope you had dinner.

On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your presentations.

We will suspend.

• (1200) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1205)

**The Chair:** Okay, we're going to start the second hour.

We have three witnesses, two by video conference from Toronto and one here in Ottawa.

Each of you has up to eight minutes to speak, and then members of the committee will have some questions for you.

Mr. Noorani, you can start first, please. Thank you.

**Mr. Naeem (Nick) Noorani (President and Chief Executive Officer, Destination Canada Information Inc.):** Thank you. It's a pleasure and an honour to be here.

In the past year I've travelled across Canada speaking to about a thousand immigrants one on one, and I've heard stories and challenges from them first-hand. The fact is, immigrants are not succeeding to their abilities. Yet we're still a desirable country for immigrants, and that leads of course to the long waiting list that we're here to discuss today. As Minister Kenney rightly pointed out, the biggest contributor to the wait list is that we're getting more applications than we can process. The answer, according to me, is not to increase approvals, but to reduce applications by making the qualifications more stringent in some critical criteria. This will ensure we get the best, most appropriate immigrants, who will in turn settle in faster.

Before we adjust those criteria, we have to review and evaluate all applications prior to a year ago, and maybe even start afresh. The immigrants on the wait list now have been waiting for their visas for years, and many are now coming in their late fifties. It's hard enough for a Canadian at the age of 50 to get a job, so imagine what it's like for a newcomer with language and credential challenges.

I would never have suggested this from a humanitarian perspective, but in June last year the change in instructions meant 80% of the immigration quota per year was reserved for those in the backlog. This is great to reduce the backlog, but the problem is that the guy who applied when he was a 42-year-old banker back home is now a 56-year-old struggling in Mississauga. This is an actual example of a new immigrant who was a bank vice-president back home.

The people who get preference are those who fall into the 29 occupational categories to a maximum of 500 per category on a first-come, first-served basis, with a cap of 10,000. We are not getting any fresh applications outside of these 29 categories. A quick look at the occupations list shows that it is calling mostly for licensed professionals in health care and trades, or cooks and labourers. Where are the salespeople? Where are the HR people and other unlicensed professionals who have the soft skills and fewer credential barriers to success?

This list was created based on the research of Canada's labour needs, but it hasn't taken into account the licensing and credential barriers that immigrants face in many of the professions. For example, specialist physicians, dentists, psychologists, and electricians get their immigration to Canada approved based on their profession being on the list. My contention is that this list and other immigration requirements are setting up immigrants for failure.

We should now start taking new applications, but with a higher emphasis on age and language, and I'm going to talk about that. With that said, the first criterion that needs to be changed is the age requirement. Currently, the age requirement for maximum points to enter Canada ranges from 21 to 49, and that range I submit is too wide. We need to break that down, and the points for age should be broken down into blocks of 10. For example, applicants who are 21 to 31 will receive 10 points, 32 to 42 get eight points, and so on. Younger immigrants learn the language and the soft skills they need to succeed faster.

Second, let's increase the points for language and drop what's right now the basic and the moderate proficiency or no proficiency. Research reports coming in year after year talk about one thing: immigrants with low language skills are not making the cut. They're doomed to a lower subsistence level. As things stand today, if you have a PhD and the requisite work experience with moderate language skills in one official language, you can still get in, but that will not translate into employment. That's the reality. We're not helping these immigrants by letting them into Canada. They're not going to be a part of our economic growth. This will reduce the flood of applications immediately to only those who have the right tools to succeed. Those who do not meet the language requirements will not clog the queue.

Third, we need to ensure that immigrants are fully aware of the barriers they're going to face before they immigrate. They should know how long it's going to take: on average, five to ten years. And then they should know how many years it's going to take for them to be able to practise in their fields, specifically as far as doctors and engineers are concerned. As it stands now, immigrants applying under the skilled worker category, based on the occupation list, understand that if you're in one of these professions, you're wanted, needed, and you're going to have no problem finding work and succeeding. That's what the list is telling them, but that's not true, because there's a huge gap between the needs of the labour market and whether immigrants can fill these gaps, because licensing is a separate issue altogether.

• (1210)

We need to start looking at ways for applicants in licensed professions like health care and trades to start the process of having credentials recognized before they land. Before visas are granted, Canada should show they have contacted the appropriate licensing board in Canada, understood the process for re-licensing, and perhaps even started the process. In fact, even unlicensed professionals would do better if they knew about the barriers they were going to have when it comes to the famous "no Canadian experience".

Even with excellent language skills, immigrants often don't have the soft skills that Canadian employers want in their staff. There needs to be a course on self-skill training, which immigrants lack, and of course one on corporate culture and working in Canada. An immigrant holding a certificate proving that he or she has understood the differences between doing business in Canada and doing business in their home country, before they are in Canada, would ease employers' hesitation in employing them.

These are hard decisions, but we need to do what's best for the future of Canada. Most importantly, we need skilled immigrants in Canada who can speak the language, hit the ground running, bring innovation, create jobs, and pay taxes.

Thank you.

• (1215)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Busby is a senior policy analyst with the C.D. Howe Institute. Good afternoon.

**Mr. Colin Busby (Senior Policy Analyst, C.D. Howe Institute):** Good afternoon, and thanks.

Thankfully, Mr. Noorani and I share a lot of opinions.

On a per capita basis, Canada runs one of the largest immigration systems among the world's advanced economies. The annual inflow of immigrants to Canada, which is about 260,000, is roughly equivalent to 0.8% of the total population. This compares to the annual immigrant inflow of roughly 0.9% of Australia's population, 0.6% of the population of the U.K., and 0.4% of the population of the U.S., for their immigration programs.

Because Canada's immigration system is so large relative to others, it's also more complex to manage. The recent global recession, coupled with Canada's relatively strong labour market

performance relative to other advanced nations, is an opportunity for Canada to attract some of the world's best and brightest talent.

Canada looks relatively good on the world stage. While the backlog of applications is surely dampening the attractiveness of Canada as a potential location, our relatively strong labour market is currently helping to offset some of the negative effects of the backlog and likely increasing the average skill sets of new applicants. Should the labour markets in other countries improve, the negative aspects of the backlog on the quality of potential applicants is sure to become more acute.

Quite simply, one could characterize two major problems facing Canada's immigration system, one of which is the backlog of applications. The average processing time for applications in Canada is still higher than the average six-month processing time in Australia. Many applicants are likely to give up on the likelihood of getting into Canada and are looking elsewhere.

Another major problem is that recently landed immigrants have not fared as well as their Canadian-born counterparts in the job market. They are not closing the gap over time as quickly as they were historically. This is manifested in part by the worsening earnings gap between immigrants and the Canadian-born population. Many new arrivals are underemployed and they are moving back home or to another country.

To reduce the backlog, policy-makers have three main options: one, increase admissions; two, limit applications; and three, limit the number of successful applications. One popular solution to the backlog, which is to increase overall immigration levels, risks exacerbating the labour market gaps between newly arrived immigrants and the Canadian-born population.

New academic work by the C.D. Howe Institute that evaluates the labour market outcomes of newly arrived immigrants according to historical data that tracks all immigrants who arrive in Canada bears out this point. For instance, increasing the annual immigration rate to 1% of the population, so that's expanding the number of immigrants by roughly 85,000 people per year, would reduce the average entry earnings of all applicants by about 3%. That amounts to roughly \$1,300 per year for males and \$900 for females. This happens because marginal applicants with lower education and language skills are more likely to enter as total immigration numbers increase.

Another solution for reducing the backlog of family class applicants would be to decrease the economic class share of immigrants under the capped level of total migrants. This could mean, for instance, reducing the economic class share from roughly 60% of total immigrants to roughly 50%. However, this would imply a reduction in average entry level earnings of approximately 7.5% for males and females, roughly \$3,400 per year.

Australia currently allocates about 70% of all immigrants to the economic class whereas Canada's share is much lower, somewhere between 55% to 60% on average over the last five or six years.

Now, immigration policy decisions should not be based totally on economic criteria such as high entry-level earnings. Family reunification, for example, has intrinsic value to many recently landed and potential immigrants. That said, economic consequences matter, especially to the extent that they contribute to beneficial consequences of immigration from the perspective of immigrants themselves and society at large.

Based on these findings, I'm not convinced that increasing the total level of immigrants or changing the share of immigrants coming through certain classes offer any easy solutions to the backlog program. Doing so while helping to reduce the number of people in the backlog would come at the cost of exacerbating the already problematic gaps in labour market outcomes of newly arrived immigrants vis-a-vis the Canadian born.

•(1220)

Better solutions to the problem, which may also have some benefits with respect to greater earnings potential, are likely in the way applicants are screened prior to landing. Take language assessment, for example. Recent reforms and announcements to move to third-party language testing should be applauded as a measure to better screen potential applicants. That should result in a lower success rate for potential applicants. Greater weight in the point system could be taken away from work experience, for example, and put toward younger applicants. This would imply adopting a point structure that places a greater emphasis on younger immigrants, giving greater weight to those in younger age categories, like in Quebec and Australia.

While none of these suggested changes to the federal screening for skilled immigrants will necessarily help the backlog of immigrants from prior to 2008, as the backlog keeps coming down we can loosen the existing filter—sort of pre-filter—on applications according to occupational need, and instead have a bolstered point system do the heavy work.

Taking a wider view of immigration policy reforms in recent years, it's fair to say that reforms have been made in response to the extended waiting period for potential applications; labour-market shortages in specific regions; earning differentials between immigrants and the Canadian-born; and the inability of the federal skilled worker program to take into account blue-collar trade skills, as opposed to general white-collar attributes and skills.

**The Chair:** Mr. Busby, perhaps you could wind up, please.

**Mr. Colin Busby:** Sure.

My final point is that the point system itself could be realigned to help some of these problems. It would be a more transparent and reliable screen than bureaucratically determined occupational need, or provincial nominee fast-tracking.

I'll conclude with that point.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Busby.

Ms. Zerehi, you have up to eight minutes to make a presentation. Thank you for coming this afternoon.

**Mrs. Sima Sahar Zerehi (Communications Coordinator, Immigration Network):** Thank you for having me.

I'm here on behalf of the Immigration Network, a group advocating for fast, fair, and effective immigration practices. Our group includes various national, regional, and local immigrant refugee organizations; community groups; as well as academic and legal professionals.

Our communities are heartened to see that steps are being taken to address the important issue of the immigration backlog. The problem has plagued Canada's immigration system for too long.

As someone who has first-hand experience in family separation due to immigration reasons, I wholeheartedly sympathize with families who are waiting for over seven years—

**The Chair:** Excuse me. We're having trouble. You have to slow down so our translator can hear you.

**Mrs. Sima Sahar Zerehi:** I will slow down. I apologize. I was watching my eight minutes.

**The Chair:** I know. I'm asking you to do two things.

Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Sima Sahar Zerehi:** Okay, I will slow down. I apologize.

As someone who's experienced first-hand family separation due to immigration reasons, I wholeheartedly sympathize with families who are waiting for over seven years to have their application processed in order to be reunified with their loved ones. We know there are many arguments towards family reunification. Parents and grandparents contribute to our well-being as a community and nation. With more adults working, the household income could be enhanced. Family reunification gives a boost to economic consumption as larger families inevitably consume more goods and services. Our recommendation towards this end is to reduce waiting times for parents and grandparents and consider a pilot project to pre-approve applications that include the extended family.

I would like to commence by expressing our support for the recent announcement regarding the increase in the number of sponsored parents and grandparents that Canada will admit next year. We see this as a real step towards positive change. The target numbers for parents and grandparents have steadily fallen from 20,000 in 2006 to 15,000 in 2010. Increasing the targets to 25,000 in 2012 will make a decided impact on the number of families who will finally be reunited.

While measures have been taken to increase the number of sponsored parents and grandparents, more can be done for immigrants in other categories. It's no secret that Canada's population increase will soon be driven by net immigration. We need to ensure that we're replacing our aging workforce, as well as meeting our vision in terms of expanding our resources and knowledge sectors. Currently, we receive an average of 250,000 immigrants every year: 232,868 in 2007; 271,028 in 2008; 258,853 in 2009; and 244,401 in 2010. These applications were processed under the existing system. Looking at these numbers, it becomes clear that we cannot reduce the backlog unless we increase the annual immigration target range. Our recommendation, unlike the speakers who came before us, is to increase the annual immigration target range from the present 240,000 to 265,000 to 320,000 to 340,000, which is around 1% of the Canadian population, to address the backlog.

Unfortunately, the good news in the recent announcement about increasing the target number of sponsored parents and grandparents was accompanied by troubling measures that will surely negatively impact Canadian families. The recent proposal from the federal government included a stipulation to put in place a pause of up to 24 months on the acceptance of new sponsorship applications for parents and grandparents effective November 5, 2011. We feel that preventing families from submitting applications is inhumane. Every family should be provided a chance to submit an application for reunification. We believe that the solution for eliminating the 165,000-strong backlog of parent and grandparent applications is to hire more people to review the applications and not simply refuse to look at applications.

I can't imagine what it would feel like to be told that my family would not be even extended the opportunity to submit an application regardless of the merits of our case. Our recommendation is to eliminate the temporary pause of up to 24 months on the acceptance of new sponsorship applications for parents and grandparents. Our second recommendation in this regard is to gear the budget allocation to Citizenship and Immigration Canada towards strengthening the capacity within the department to effectively eliminate the backlog in processing family reunifications requests and permanent residence applications.

The federal government also recently announced the new parent and grandparent super visa, which will be valid for up to 10 years. The multiple-entry visa is designed to allow an applicant to remain in Canada for up to 24 months at a time without the need for renewal of their status. The visa, which comes into effect on December 1, 2011, promises to be issued within eight weeks of application. Applicants will be required to obtain private Canadian healthcare insurance for their stay in Canada.

While on the surface this measure seems to be a move towards eliminating our immigration backlog, upon closer examination it becomes clear that this is a temporary solution at best, which can only work as a band-aid, rather than a cure for our ailments. Multiple-entry visas have already been part of our system. In fact, we have had the five-year multiple-entry visa in place for a number of years, and it has yet to make an impact on our immigration backlog.

• (1225)

In reality, families accessing visitor visas have been subjected to extremely high rejection rates. A visitor visa is ultimately an inadequate substitute for permanent residency status particularly if it's not accompanied by a mechanism that will allow applicants to land as permanent immigrants after a number of years of residency in Canada.

Ultimately, much more work needs to be done in fine-tuning the parent and grandparent super visa before it can be posited as a real solution. We welcome the opportunity to work with the government on addressing the shortcomings of this initiative in the near future in order to meet the needs of all stakeholders. Our recommendation in this regard is to review the parent and grandparent super visa in order to build the mechanisms for permanent residency after a number of years of residency in Canada.

We also believe that we should look at how we can utilize existing programs to meet the needs of Canadian families. One such measure

would be to expand the Canadian economic class to allow long-term residents and temporary workers to land. For years we have expressed our concern about the policy shift of the Ministry of Immigration whereby immigrants are increasingly being understood and treated as cheap and exploitable labour to be brought here through temporary visas.

This government has brought in numerous changes to allow more flexibility to visa offices to bring in skilled workers to meet labour needs. Employers claim labour shortages of both high-skilled and low-skilled workers, with much of this perceived labour shortage occurring in the lower-skilled sectors.

Under the existing point system, low-skilled workers will never have enough points to stay in Canada as permanent residents and never qualify as citizens or be able to bring their families to Canada.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Perhaps you can wind up, please.

**Mrs. Sima Sahar Zerehi:** Yes.

We have heard numerous testimonies from employees who are concerned that these temporary workers programs are ineffectual, as workers are in the country for only a few years before being forced to leave after finally being trained and settled in their new jobs. Clearly, employers want their workers to be in Canada on a permanent and stable basis. This is common business sense.

Finally, these applicants already reside in Canada and have ties to our business and communities. In addition, they have already been subjected to criminal and health checks. We recommend expanding the Canadian economic class to allow long-term residents and temporary workers to land. We also recommend that the government reform its requirements under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and bring workers to Canada permanently, rather than rushing in these potential immigrants as temporary cheap labourers.

I have one more quick point, but I'll just conclude because of the time shortage. The point is around non-status immigrants, if you would like to ask me any questions about that.

To conclude, we hope that through open and transparent debate and dialogue, we can finally find a means to eliminate the immigration backlog and transform our broken system into one that meets the needs of all Canadians.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Sima Sahar Zerehi:** We welcome the opportunity—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. I'm the guardian of the clock, and I have to stop you.

**Mrs. Sima Sahar Zerehi:** No worries.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your presentation.

**Mrs. Sima Sahar Zerehi:** You have to do what you have to do.

**The Chair:** Indeed.

Mr. Menegakis has up to seven minutes.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC):** Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you so much for joining us today. Thank you so much for your insightful presentations. I listened very carefully.

I'd like to direct my first question to Mr. Noorani.

Your recommendations on how to reduce the backlog focused primarily on economic immigrants. As you are aware, many parents and grandparents are waiting up to seven or eight years to come to Canada. Do you think you can apply the same methods you recommended to the parents and grandparents? I'd like to hear what your view would be on that and on the things you think we can implement to help reduce that backlog.

**Mr. Naeem (Nick) Noorani:** Thank you, Mr. Menegakis. I hope I'm pronouncing it right.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Yes, it's fine. No problem. Thank you.

**Mr. Naeem (Nick) Noorani:** This problem has been on my conscience for a while. My mother passed away last year. She was one of the people who wanted to come to Canada and she couldn't, because it was going to take years. So there is a personal story here.

But I think what has happened is.... I'm going to take Minister Kenney's analogy of the plane and the number of seats. The fact is we are selling more seats than we have. What's happening is that the people who are coming to the airport are not the 100 who can get on the plane but the 800 who have applied. So the airport is going to have what we have: a logjam.

I think Minister Kenney's recommendation is to be lauded: number one, to increase the numbers so that we can start tearing down the backlog. Number two, I think the super visa is frankly a silver bullet. I have spoken to a lot of immigrants. A lot of parents don't want to come to Canada, because they have their own networks back home. My mother-in-law lives with us. Her whole day is spent watching TV. That's a terrible life. She doesn't speak to anyone except when she goes to church.

I think this would allow parents to come and go, back and forth. The only reason many of them actually apply for the family-class visa is that there's a problem getting visitor visas. I believe that the super visa will alleviate a lot of problems. Will it solve the problem in its entirety? I don't think so. But I think there is going to be a Canada-wide discussion, which is important in the spirit of democracy, so I actually support this.

Thank you.

•(1235)

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Thank you.

Mr. Busby, do you care to comment on that?

**Mr. Colin Busby:** Well, it's a very challenging question. And the point I was trying to make was I don't think there is any easy quick fix for us to do this in a reasonably short timeframe and in a way that will not affect, in one way, shape, or form, the already growing problem we have, not just with the backlog—as I said, that is one problem with the immigration system—but with the growing gap between earnings results for newly arrived immigrants and the Canadian-born. You simply can't do one by increasing the numbers too much or expanding the level of total immigrants without significantly hurting the other.

What I am thinking is that while they have put the recent cap on the number of potential applications, that seems to me like some sort of forward progress, in the sense that you can't really start to get rid of the backlog, and you can't even start to allocate a marginally larger share of the total immigrants toward family class unless you start to put in place some type of system like that.

As painful as I think it is going to be, I only see progress taking place on this front in very small increments. And if you want to make those large increments, if you want to expand the numbers to significant levels like I was proposing, then you have to be prepared that there will be other consequences as well to those policies. I have to keep pointing the finger back at the point that we are seeing extraordinarily large growth in the divergence of earnings results for immigrants and the Canadian-born population, and that's not a problem we want to see grow.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Thank you.

Let me ask you directly, then, if you agree with the minister's balanced approach, where we use multiple tools in the toolbox to reach a balanced solution to the backlog.

My colleagues' approach from the other side of the floor, particularly the NDP's approach, is to double the immigration levels of our already historically high levels.

What would you—

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Chairman, is that not a policy question?

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** It might be. I can go on.

**The Chair:** I don't know....

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** These are individuals who have already announced their policy—

**The Chair:** I can only say to both of you there is going to be lots of time to go at each other when we debate this report. I prefer that you do that then, and direct your questions to the witnesses.

Thank you, Mr. Davies.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** On the first part of my question, then, do you agree with a balanced approach to resolving the problem using multiple tools in the toolbox?

**Mr. Colin Busby:** Are you directing that to me?

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Yes.

**Mr. Colin Busby:** Okay. I guess the short answer would have to be that by relying solely on one tool, whether it is the total immigration level or especially with the effects that we saw in the academic studies that we performed.... And we track data on all immigrant arrivals to Canada. So by looking historically at the results of what the largest policy change was with respect to immigration over the last 15 years, and that was the expansion of the economic class share within the total level of immigrants coming to Canada, without that increase taking place—where it has now gone up to 60% or 65% from what was once 40%—the types of earnings differentials between immigrants and the Canadian-born would have grown even bigger than what they were and what we saw.



I guess the short answer is yes, I'd like to see a mixture of tools and a long time horizon reasonably put on trying to get rid of this backlog. But you still need the resolve to get it done. So at the end of the day, I, like Mr. Noorani, believe that we can rely on a bolstered point system that more intelligently applies weights to skills we're looking for to prevent this type of situation from happening in the future.

•(1240)

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Thank you.

How is my time, Mr. Chairman?

**The Chair:** You're out of time. I'm sorry.

Mr. Kellway, of the NDP caucus.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

And to all of the witnesses this afternoon, thank you very much for coming and sharing your thoughts with us.

Mr. Busby, Minister Kenney came to our committee a number of weeks ago and provided us with a presentation on immigration levels and this issue of the backlog. Part of that presentation showed a graph of immigration levels over the last 17 years, with the Conservative government's average immigration levels exceeding those of the Liberal government's average immigration levels by over 30,000 per year.

I take it from your presentation that you would consider those levels let in by the Conservative government bad policy.

**Mr. Colin Busby:** I don't want to oversimplify the results that I presented earlier. What I'm trying to say is that the economic results of immigrants who come to Canada should be a very important factor in deciding how we run our immigration system—that means how many people we let in, what share of economic class, what share of family class, etc.

Increasing the overall number of immigrants will have consequences, perhaps, on the economic results of people who come to Canada. If we increase it to higher levels, at some point we'll have more and more marginal applicants getting into Canada who are going to struggle more in the labour market.

At the same time, reducing the economic class share and increasing the family class share will have similar results. I don't really want to take sides—one policy versus another—but what I'm trying to bring into the debate is some very important academic research on economic consequences, which is one of the major problems facing the immigration system today.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway:** Thank you very much for that.

I think the word that you used is quite appropriate—it's this issue of oversimplification. And I don't want to be targeting this at you, Mr. Busby, but we've had a number of witnesses at this committee coming from academic or research institutions who are talking about the research they've done.

Consistently—and interestingly, because most of these tend to be right-wing institutions—their concern has been about the level of wages for Canadians and the impact of immigration levels on that. Yet they tend to be looking at a single factor, and that is the level of

immigration. I get that it matters in theory, but what is missing from this research—and perhaps you can comment on that—are all the other factors that seem to be far more profound on the level of wages in Canada than an addition of a few thousand folks at the immigrant level. I would look to issues like minimum wage levels in Canada and policies on that. I would look to trade policies and practices and the decline in manufacturing in Canada.

In your study, do you have any sense of how big the impact is for these immigrant levels on wages across this vast country and vast labour market?

**Mr. Colin Busby:** The one point of clarification I want to make is that the figures I presented earlier did not represent the result of the Canadian-born population's earnings. I was presenting the results of the immigrants' earnings upon arrival. So when I was talking about increasing the total number of immigrants impacting the earnings results of immigrants themselves, that's what I was referring to—not necessarily the impact on the Canadian-born population.

Now, the one caveat—and you hit upon it—is that in doing these types of studies, it has to be said that it's only representing the data we have access to, which is wage data. That is not a complete assessment of immigration policy, which needs to take into account the positive effect that family reunification has on individuals' well-being and on families' well-being.

The only trouble, as a lot of academics and institutes like mine will say, is that quantifying that is reasonably difficult, which is why I don't have any figures to present to you.

•(1245)

**Mr. Matthew Kellway:** Well, I think that's the point; otherwise, these become highly theoretical matters, and quite remote from what I think many of us in our positions as MPs would call “reality on the ground”.

Coming from Toronto, you're probably aware of “priority neighbourhoods”. There's one of them in my riding in Toronto; I knocked on those doors, and it's a very high immigrant population. It's a very highly educated population and a very poor population. It's not unusual to knock on a door to find a medical doctor answering the door who has not had a job in this country for years. It's not unusual to find an engineer answering the door who can't find work even though there is a shortage of engineers in the power industry in Ontario. It's not unusual to find people with MAs and PhDs—and I could go on and on. It seems to me that something has gone wrong in the immigration system and around settlement services that has a far more profound effect on average income levels of immigrants in this country than that very marginal number all these academic researchers have been focusing on.

I'm wondering, in the context of your academic research, if you have focused on the impact of how we deal with immigrants—highly skilled immigrants—and settle them in this country and provide access to work for these folks when they get here. And how does that relate to the numbers you're talking about?

**The Chair:** You know, this is happening repeatedly. We talk and ask questions, and then you leave ten seconds for the witness to answer a question. I'm bound to follow the clock, and it's unfair to colleagues on the committee when you do that.

I'm going to let him finish the answer, but in the future bear in mind that using up the time and asking a question in the final ten seconds is not useful. I say this to all members, because everybody's doing it. You're not the only one

Go ahead, Mr. Busby.

**Mr. Colin Busby:** The biggest problem we've seen with immigrants coming through the points systems and their performance in the labour market has to be the work experience factor. The points we give to work experience are quite large in the points system, yet experience in the labour market itself is discounted almost 100%. It's hard for a Canadian employer to assign much value to that foreign experience, and it's proving harder and harder.

One interesting aspect of Australia's points system is that they evaluate the foreign credentials and work experience prior to arrival. This way, immigrants have an understanding of how well they may or may not do in the job market, if they don't have a job to go to upon arrival. I think we could rework the way in which we evaluate work experience and the points that we apply within the points system.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lamoureux.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Busby, I want to make a statement and then see how you would respond to it.

There is the idea of the optimum number of immigrants that Canada could absorb in any given year. The current government says they're looking at 250,000 to 260,000. Canada as a nation has grown, and so has our economy. Some of the most successful numbers of immigrants, in per capita terms, came during the nineties, not in the last year or two. I know that might shock a few people around here. It is because it's based on the percentage of the population. It's based on the mixture. If you bring in 200,000 from one category, that doesn't necessarily represent a healthy immigration policy. You have to have a good mixture—the right number of grandparents, parents, investor groups, economic class, and so forth.

Would you not agree with the importance of the mixture? If we get the mixture right, could it be argued that you could achieve 1% as a target, something we have passed previously and I think we could achieve again?

**Mr. Colin Busby:** That is a very difficult question: what should the overall appropriate level be? I remember the 1%. The only time I've ever come out against an economic study was in 1990, when the Economic Council of Canada suggested that we move to a 1% target of the population. I don't have an easy answer, but I would emphasize that getting the right mix is probably the most fundamentally important thing that we could do. In considering the labour market earnings of recently arrived immigrants, it's changing the mix that has the largest effect.

If the Canadian government were to expand the economic class share, as it did in the early 1990s, the labour market earnings gaps between newly arrived immigrants and those born in Canada would be much larger than it already is, and it's already quite bad. So I think

that keeping the economic class share quite high, at that 60% level, should be an important part of the mixture going forward. Australia's system has about a 70% economic class share, but given our challenges with the backlog in the family and reunification class, I would prefer to keep the range that we're at right now and not deviate from it.

• (1250)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Noorani, you make reference to the importance of the points structure and prioritizing the points structure. Do you have something you could provide to the committee as an alternative points structure?

**Mr. Naem (Nick) Noorani:** Thank you. That's a great question.

Let's talk about age. That's the biggest one. The fact is, we're getting immigrants who are coming in who are 50 years old. That's a problem. I feel bad. There is no chance of them ever reaching what they were back home. It's not going to work.

If you look at the age structure, the age currently between 21 years and 49 years is one set of points. That needs to be broken down into categories to ensure that someone who is younger and will have a greater economic impact on our country will get more points than someone who is 49 years of age, because if he gets the same number of points as the one who is 21 years, by the time he gets his immigration papers he's 55. That's one.

Number two, the language is a huge issue with which I have a big problem. We keep talking about the problem that immigrants aren't succeeding. Let's ask the question why. When you have immigrants who are over-age, when you have immigrants who do not have the ability to speak the language, how are they going to get the jobs when they don't have the soft skills? I've talked to immigrants who don't know what they're set up for, but their name is on the list.

I've read the reports from the last few committees. You had an immigration lawyer who talked about bringing in doctors, and I'm cringing there. Do these guys not know that they have a better chance of winning the LOTTO 6/49 than of ever becoming a doctor? This is a human issue. We are known as a compassionate country. This is what upsets me: we are bringing in people with the wrong results.

I could be a PhD, I could have ten years of experience, I could have the lowest level of language skills, and I'd meet the points requirement. Will I get a job? I hope I've answered the question.

Lastly, in my work with immigrants for the past 13 years, since the time I came to this country, I have figured out one thing: immigrants have a problem with soft skills. If you address the soft skills, if you explain to them what the soft skills are, it's going to help them work. They need the language skills, they need the soft skills.

I hope I've answered your question.

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

Ms. James.

**Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just recently our government introduced the new parents and grandparents super visa. My NDP colleague in the opposition mentioned that we actually introduced that last July with the 10-year multi-entry visa, which is not correct. The new parents and grandparents super visa has significant differences, including the ability to allow grandparents and parents to come to Canada to visit with their family for extended visits up to 24 months.

Additionally, I heard in this session Ms. Sahar Zerehi reference the five-year multi-entry visa which is very similar to the 10-year multi-entry visa. But both actually only allow for people to come to Canada for visits up to six months, so there is a tremendous benefit to families to actually utilize the new parents and grandparents super visa.

In addition to that, we're here studying backlogs and we hear from witnesses again and again that it can take up to eight years for parents and grandparents to come to Canada to be reunited. In fact, Mr. Noorani, you said that during that period you had a close relative pass away. With regard to this new super visa for parents and grandparents, we're going to be able to process these applications within eight weeks, so we're talking eight years to eight weeks. This is the most generous visa ever offered in the Canadian immigration system in the history of Canada.

I just wonder, Mr. Noorani, if you can comment on that, and what your thoughts are in general on the super visa.

• (1255)

**Mr. Naeem (Nick) Noorani:** Thank you, Ms. James.

The biggest advantage is that immigrants don't want their parents to come here. They don't want to yank them out of their own social networks. My mother-in-law, before she came to Canada, had a vibrant social network. Every day she'd call up people and they'd argue about the price of chicken and eggs. She can't do that in Canada, unfortunately. So to bring them from there and uproot them....

The only reason my mother-in-law has a family-class visa is not because she wants to stay with us, but because it's so difficult.... After coming to Canada for six months, she was refused a visitor visa for two consecutive years. The third time, finally, we applied for it.

Now, the interesting thing the minister has also put in is that you would be paying for private medical. And Ms. James, may I just touch on that for a minute? Private medical is what I bought for my mother-in-law before she became a landed immigrant—the oldest one in our family to be a landed immigrant—and the amount of money I paid for private insurance is the same amount I'm paying for MSP.

**Ms. Roxanne James:** Thank you, Mr. Noorani.

I'm probably down to only five minutes at this point. In general, regarding the 24 months versus a previous six-month stay, do you think it's going to be appealing to families, grandparents, and parents to take advantage of the 24-month super visa, as opposed to in the past where they were only allowed the option of six months?

**Mr. Naeem (Nick) Noorani:** It's huge. Absolutely, because it allows you to go back and forth. This is the freedom it allows you to

have. I think we've never had this kind of thing before, and I think it's great.

**Ms. Roxanne James:** Thank you.

I just wanted to touch base on the humanitarian basis, because I hear this again and again. Currently, families have to wait up to eight years to see their parents and grandparents. In many cases, parents or grandparents may die during that time or develop physical limitations that would prevent their actually travelling to Canada. Is it more humane to allow eight years' wait, or to give them the option of eight weeks to actually have that reunification with their family so they can spend time and see the parents and grandparents?

**Mr. Naeem (Nick) Noorani:** This is great. I think this is a lot better than what it used to be, as you said very rightly, especially when you have people coming from countries where there's a one-child policy. So when the immigrant comes here, basically two sets of parents have no social network; they have no one there. At least with this, they are able to go back and forth, spend time with the delivery of their grandchildren, hopefully, and be a part of the family unit. It's a lot better than what it used to be, without a doubt.

**Ms. Roxanne James:** Thank you.

Additionally—and you've commented on it as well—many families do not want to come for permanent residency; they just want to come to spend time with their families. The two years is fantastic now. Do you have any idea what the percentages are, or how many people do you think would actually want to take advantage of the super visa, as opposed to waiting eight years to actually have the permanent residency?

**Mr. Naeem (Nick) Noorani:** Richard Kurland and I were on the same radio show on CBC, and he and I had this discussion. Richard had one set of figures. My personal thought is that your backlog will probably drop by 50% because they'd rather come here and see their family. They're longing to be part of the family. Imagine taking an entire family back to India. Each person is going to cost you \$1,500 to \$1,800. To take a family of four is a lot of money.

**Ms. Roxanne James:** Thank you.

How much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** Less than two minutes.

**Ms. Roxanne James:** Okay, I'll try to be quick.

This super visa is actually just one step of a four-step process for faster family reunification under our action plan. As we've said, we're actually increasing the number of permanent residencies for parents and grandparents from about 15,500 to up to 25,000 in 2012. That alone will partially reduce the backlog. We talked about a temporary pause, but that is also needed so we don't have a large flood of new applications. Additionally, that will allow us to do consultations over the next two years to actually come up with a redesigned, faster, and more sustainable program.

I've heard from Mr. Busby through the video conference here. He has also mentioned that there is no quick fix, so we understand that. You've indicated that with the new super visa you figure that maybe even 50% of the applications for permanent residency will come into play, which is key. Obviously increasing the numbers we're allowing in for the next couple of years is also key. But we also need to take a step back and really take a look at the process.

Do you actually agree with this action plan we're implementing right now?

• (1300)

**Mr. Naeem (Nick) Noorani:** I think it's a great plan. I think it's going to go a long way towards bringing us back to how we are known globally, as a compassionate nation.

I do want to ask for a clarification here of something I don't know.

**The Chair:** We're running out of time, sir. I'm sorry; we have to end the meeting.

**Mr. Naeem (Nick) Noorani:** Okay, very quickly. I'm not sure if someone who comes on a visit visa can continue staying in the queue for the sponsorship.

I see Mr. Weston shaking his head.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, unless there's a quick statement, we've got to stop this.

**Ms. Roxanne James:** Sorry, is my time up?

**The Chair:** Yes, it is. I'm very sorry.

As you can see, we could go on and on here. There are a lot of issues to cover, but the time has expired for the meeting and I have to conclude it.

Mr. Noorani and Mr. Busby, thank you for coming back a second time, from—when was it?—November 3. I appreciate that.

Ms. Zerehi, I pronounced your name incorrectly, I know, but I wish you well in recovering from your automobile accident.

To the three of you, on behalf of the committee, we appreciate your presentations.

This meeting is adjourned.

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