



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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CIMM • NUMBER 004 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, November 21, 2013**

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**Chair**

**Mr. David Tilson**



## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Thursday, November 21, 2013

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP)):** We can start this fourth meeting of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. Thank you all for being here today.

According to our agenda, we'll spend the first hour studying the possibility of suggesting amendments to the Standing Committee on Finance. In the second hour of our meeting, witnesses from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration will join us for an information session, which will be followed by a question and answer period.

For this first hour of our meeting, which will run until noon, I'd like to remind everyone that on November 5, the Standing Committee on Finance sent us a letter inviting us, should the committee so wish, to convey our recommendations, including any suggested amendments in relation to clauses 174 and 175 and 290 to 293 of Bill C-4.

In carrying out its work, the committee may choose to hear witnesses—which we did in the last two meetings—may choose to recommend changes or propose amendments to the Standing Committee on Finance, which will then take these into consideration during its clause-by-clause study of Bill C-4.

For the first hour of the meeting, we have with us Mr. McNamee, Director, Immigration Strategies and Analysis, Ms. Welbourne, Senior Director, Strategic Policy and Planning, Ms. Imrie, Director General, Passport Program Transition Office, and Ms. Dikranian, Senior Analyst, Passport Program Transition Office. Thank you for being here this morning.

These witnesses are here to answer questions and provide clarification on any topic that may influence our decision to send amendments, suggested amendments or suggested changes to the Standing Committee on Finance.

Honourable members of the committee, the floor is yours. I'm waiting to see if you have any suggested amendments to send to the Standing Committee on Finance.

Mr. McCallum, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Merci.

I have one proposed amendment that I think you have received. I'll just read it. It proposes adding a subsection 10.1(3.1):

Despite subsection (3), an instruction given by the Minister under this section takes effect on the 30th day after it is given.

The idea here is that, rather than having ministerial instructions go out with zero opportunity for the public or for experts to respond, there would be a 30-day period during which the minister could get advice. During those 30 days, the minister might choose to change or amend the instructions. I think that's consistent with what Richard Kurland said in evidence about the lack of due process. I think it's also consistent with a letter from the Canadian Bar Association, which said:

The CBA section has concerns about the limited consultation on this important change to Canadian immigration law and policy.

It goes on in that vein. I think one could even argue that it's in the interest of the government. If one puts out instructions that one later learns are imperfect, then it's embarrassing, but if one has a 30-day period of consultation to listen to alternative points of view, the end product might be better for all concerned.

That is my proposed amendment.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Thank you, Mr. McCallum.

Ms. Sitsabaiesan, you have the floor.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

On the subject of amendments to Bill C-4, a bill that the House of Commons has sent to the finance committee, I don't find it appropriate for us to be proposing amendments at this stage, because the bill is being studied at finance.

What I would like to see happen is that the bill be broken up so that we as the immigration committee have the power to study it. Right now we don't have the power to study the bill and I'd like us to have that power. At this stage, we're not really proposing amendments; we're proposing suggestions to the finance committee.

We're not doing a study of the bill and we're proposing to write a letter to the finance committee rather than make amendments. At this stage, I think I am fair in speaking on behalf of my colleagues in the NDP. We are saying that we cannot support this amendment or any amendment. We don't have the authority to make amendments, because of the process that's being followed here. This is in violation of proper due process, in my opinion. I can't support this amendment right now.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Thank you, Madame Sitsabaiesan.

Now, Mr. Menegakis, you have the floor.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC):** I would like to move that we go in camera, Madam Chair.

• (1110)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** This is not a debatable motion. So we will vote on the motion to go in camera.

[English]

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Can I have a recorded vote, please, Madam Chair?

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Certainly.

Madam Clerk, I'll let you proceed.

(The motion is carried 6 to 4.)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** The committee has decided to continue the meeting in camera. I will suspend the debate. I ask those who are not authorized to follow in camera proceedings to leave the room. We will resume our meeting in a minute.

[The meeting continues in camera.]

• (1150)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** We are resuming the fourth meeting of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

In this second hour, we have the following witnesses: David Manicom, Director General, Immigration Branch, Diane Burrows, Director General, Operational Management and Coordination, Jean-Pierre Lamarche, Director General, Passport Program Management and Strategic Initiatives, and Caitlin Imrie, Director General, Passport Program Transition Office.

I'd like to thank you all very much for being here. You will make an opening statement, which will be followed by questions. The floor is yours.

**Mr. David Manicom (Director General, Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to be here today to answer the questions of committee members about the programs, policies and operations of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

My name is David Manicom, and I am the director general responsible for immigration policies. I have three colleagues with me today to help me answer your questions.

[English]

Diane Burrows is the director general of the operational management and coordination branch and can speak to our processing network and a broad range of operational issues. As I mentioned, I'm the director general of the immigration branch, with responsibility

for program policy relating to all permanent and temporary-entry programs, with the exception of refugees.

Jean-Pierre Lamarche is the director general for passport program management and strategic initiatives, and will be able to speak to questions about the passport program, as will Caitlin Imrie, the director general of the passport transition office.

We have provided members with a large 11-page document that provides a great amount of detail on the operation of our department and the range of programs we administer. It will also situate some of the challenges and opportunities the department has.

I hope this document will be useful reference material for committee members, given that since 2006 CIC has embarked on one of the most ambitious rounds of immigration reform in many years. In the interest of time and to allow more opportunity for your questions, I would like at this time to provide a brief overview of the contents of that document rather than walking through it in detail, which would take up much of the committee's time here today.

Page 2 gives significant detail on our operational network around the world and in Canada, as well as on some of the service innovation steps the department is taking to modernize our processing network. This section gives the committee members a glimpse of the complexity of managing an effective immigration system. My colleague Diane can provide you with further details on our operational network.

Pages 3 to 5 give an overview of temporary and permanent migration to Canada, some numbers and categories, as well as what we do in the area of refugee protection. There have been some significant changes to these program areas since 2006, which are highlighted in the document. We would be pleased to respond to your questions about these changes. I would be happy to provide you with more information on temporary and permanent immigration programs.

Page 6 describes the immigration continuum from the intention to immigrate, to the granting of citizenship. This page offers an important reminder that the process of immigration begins long before an individual lands at our border and doesn't end until residents are fully engaged Canadian citizens.

Page 7 details how we construct the annual levels plan, which is Canada's main tool for establishing the level, the number, and the mix of immigrants accepted as permanent residents on an annual basis. If you wish, I can provide you with a more detailed explanation of our levels process.

Some of you may have heard of the planned expression of interest application management system, which was inspired by similar systems in Australia and New Zealand. We include information about how we anticipate the system will work in Canada when it's implemented in 2015. Let me know if you have any questions related to the proposed EOI system.

Pages 8 and 9 give an overview of our integration, citizenship, and multiculturalism programs.

Page 10 offers a reminder that CIC does not operate alone and that there are many other players involved across the full program spectrum, including other orders of government and the private sector. This page gives some perspective on the full range of partnerships we have.

Finally, page 11 gives some statistics about the work our processing network completed in 2012, including admissions of permanent and temporary residents. Diane is well-positioned to elaborate on these statistics if it's needed.

We would be pleased at this point to walk you through certain sections of the document in order to describe in further detail the information you see in front of you. If you wish, I could provide more detailed information on levels, planning, the expression of interest system, or general information on our integration, citizenship, and multiculturalism programs.

Diane can talk to you about processing times, application intake, and our overseas and domestic processing network, and I can provide further details on our family and economic classes, as well as on the temporary immigration of workers, students, and visitors.

•(1155)

Finally, Jean-Pierre and Caitlin will be to answer your questions regarding the passport program. As we don't have experts on all areas of the program attending here today, if we are unable to answer any specific questions, the department will be happy to follow up with the clerk as soon as possible. Otherwise, we look forward to any specific questions you may have.

Merci beaucoup.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Thank you, Mr. Manicom.

We will now move on to questions.

Mr. Menegakis, you have the floor for seven minutes.

[English]

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you very much to our officials from Citizenship and Immigration for taking the time today to present these placemats—I think that's what we call them—that clearly give us an overview of what the department does.

It is very comprehensive and we deem it very important, not only for new members who have just joined the committee since this session began on October 16, but even for members who have been here before and who have an opportunity to refresh their knowledge of everything the department does.

We have a number of questions we'd like to pose, and I'd like to know where we are today with a couple of things that have been discussed in the past. Specifically, does the department have a sense of how many people, such as skilled workers, have abandoned their applications to come to Canada and chosen to emigrate to another country because of the backlog or wait times?

Do we keep statistics on that kind of information?

•(1200)

**Ms. Diane Burrows (Director General, Operational Management and Coordination, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** My understanding is no, not at this point. We do not have any information that would lead to a greater understanding of the question that you're asking, sir.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** As you might recall, earlier this year we passed the Faster Removal of Foreign Criminals Act. I believe it got royal assent. I was very pleased that it was passed.

What that piece of legislation did was to limit the right of appeal to criminals and modified the ministerial relief process for persons inadmissible to Canada on grounds of security, violation of human rights, organized crime, and so forth.

Is there evidence available on how this legislation has impacted the safety of Canadians?

**Mr. David Manicom:** With regard to the number of removals and the categories of removals, those statistics would be with the Canada Border Services Agency. I'm afraid I don't have that material in front of me. We would have to provide that as a follow-up.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** In the package you gave us, I noticed that we have the immigration levels plan for 2012. The minister very recently tabled the levels for 2014 in the House. Would it be possible to provide us with a copy of the latest table the minister provided so that we can update this package?

**Mr. David Manicom:** Yes, sir.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Of course, do that through the clerk, so that all members can receive it.

**Mr. David Manicom:** Certainly.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** My next question is as follows. Our government believes that integration is key to the success of immigrants in Canada, and we want to ensure that immigrants can speak one of the two official languages of Canada, English or French. That way, they can enter the labour market faster, with work that matches their skill sets as quickly as possible. Despite settlement funding having been frozen for a good decade by the previous Liberal government, this government has tripled it. If we were to drastically increase immigration levels, as some members of the opposition have suggested in the past, the ability to integrate immigrants would diminish, we believe.

Would you agree with that?

**Mr. David Manicom:** I guess your question, sir, was whether an increase in levels would lead to a decrease in the ability of immigrants to integrate.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Yes.

**Mr. David Manicom:** I think it would depend on the volume of the increase, the selection criteria and profile of the immigrants being brought in, the status of the Canadian labour market at the time, and the settlement funding available.

I think it's a rather complex question to answer, sir.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Okay.

Would you care to expand on why integration is important?

**Mr. David Manicom:** I....

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** I understand that it could be beyond the scope of the presentation here today.

**Mr. David Manicom:** I think it's a self-evident good that immigrants become full members of Canadian society and be able to participate in our civic culture and labour market and, most importantly, I guess, that they're happy.

• (1205)

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

I'm looking at the first page of the package that you gave us. The graph is quite striking, actually. If we look at this, we see two big spikes, and they both happen around the two world wars, with immigrants wanting to come to Canada after the First World War and the Second World War. That's a striking. It's understandable that people would want to come to a country that respects freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, especially after a time of war.

Just taking a look at the last 10 to 20 years, the level of sustained immigration into the country is unprecedented in the country's history. Certainly, that has contributed to the difficulty in dealing with backlogs. Would you agree with that?

**Mr. David Manicom:** No, I wouldn't, sir.

The accumulation of backlogs is not directly related to levels; it's related to a disjoint, if you will, between the levels plan and the department and the government's policies with regard to managing the intake of applications. For a number of years, we had no effective tools to manage the intake of applications. The front end of the system, if you will, was open-ended, yet we were obliged, as a department, to carefully manage output to the annual levels plan as presented to Parliament. That disjoint was large in some categories, small in others, but overall it led to the very significant accumulation of inventories, which, of course, had a number of negative effects, both with regard to the service you provided to clients, the costliness of maintaining such a large inventory, and the loss of efficiency, and so forth.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Thank you, Mr. Manicom.

Sorry about that, but your time is over. Thank you, Mr. Menegakis.

Madam Sitsabaiesan, you have the floor for seven minutes.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, first of all, to all of our officials.

On page four, you speak of the EOI and say it's under a consultation process. I just want clarification that the EOI, first of all, is for the economic class of immigrants. What we were told by other officials is that for people who come under the EOI, their families will be processed at the same time as well. Is that correct?

**Mr. David Manicom:** That's right.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Okay, great.

We've heard concerns from organizations like the Canadian Bar Association about the EOI system, in general, that it possibly

changes selection rules and procedures that would be made by ministerial instructions and not policy recommendations by Parliament. They were concerned about that. We were told that that in the fall of 2012 consultations were held with employers on the EOI system.

Can you tell us who and how many employers attended those consultations and how many meetings were held?

**Mr. David Manicom:** No, I don't have the details of that. I know there were a number of sessions and a large number of employers engaged. We can provide that information in the follow-up.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Fabulous. Thank you. If you could provide to the clerk who and how many employers attended those consultations and how many meetings were held, that would be greatly appreciated.

I'm getting some of this information from the letter that the bar association sent to this committee. The bar association believes that consultation would help rather than impede the implementation process. Looking at page four, it says that consultations are under way right now, so I'm assuming there are more consultations that are continuing to happen, based on information you provided to us on page four here.

I'm just wondering if these consultations that are under way right now are going to be open to the public. Will they be transparent? Are labour and other industry groups also going to be invited to these consultations?

**Mr. David Manicom:** Yes. Because of the absence of Sandra Harder, who is ill and was supposed to be here today, and is the lead on that file, I don't have the details of the future consultation plans with respect to expression of interest. I do not know of any plans to have completely open, public consultations. We are in regular consultations with the provinces, particularly, right now, as we try to define how the provinces will participate in the program. Due to the large number of consultations with industry in the past, I don't have details about future ones, but there already have been a large number.

• (1210)

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Fantastic. I'm just going from what's on page 4 here. It says that consultations are under way, so I'm assuming they're still happening.

Could you please provide that information to the clerk as well, because you said your colleague is not here to provide us those answers? If you can provide details in writing as to the future consultation meetings that are still continuing, open to the public, transparent, and also whether labour and industry groups will be invited to participate in those consultations, that would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Now changing gears a little to the annual report to Parliament on immigration, it describes various measures that the federal government had pursued to eliminate backlogs and reduce processing times, including, of course, limiting or delaying the intake of new applications, terminating applications from previous years, and creating centralized management processes. This is page 6 and 7 of the report.

What impact have these measures had on the efficiency of the programs that had been experiencing significant backlogs? How many applicants have had their applications terminated? How many applications have been delayed?

**Ms. Diane Burrows:** If you don't mind, could you repeat some of the questions a little bit for me? We're trying to find the pages as we go.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Okay, sure.

This is all from the annual report. What impact have these measures had on the efficiency of the programs that had been experiencing significant backlogs? How many applicants have had their applications terminated? How many applications have been delayed?

**Mr. David Manicom:** For the number of applications terminated, I don't have the exact figure with me, but it was approximately 300,000 individuals in the federal skilled worker program. I don't think I can provide an answer to a question like how many applications have been delayed, because I don't know what your definition of delay is.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** It would be further than the advertised time on the website. We know the times on the website are probably not the reality for many people. That's the case anyway in my constituency for people that—

**Mr. David Manicom:** The information on processing times on the websites is statistical information. They represent the processing time for 80% of cases, so there are 20% of cases that fall outside of those processing times by category and by office.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Maybe all of those 20% are living in Scarborough. I don't know. All 20%, those statistical anomalies, live in my community it seems.

**Mr. David Manicom:** That ones that go very fast don't have a strong tendency to approach their members of Parliament.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** This is true.

Maybe you can provide those numbers to the clerk as well. You said you don't have the exact number and you were giving us a guesstimation, so could you provide an actual number?

**Mr. David Manicom:** The number of applications terminated is about 300,000. We can provided the exact figure.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Fantastic. Thank you very much.

Once again, from the report, are the changes that are taking place being communicated to previous applicants who had their applications terminated? Is it being communicated to the 300,000, or whatever the number is, whose applications have been terminated? If so, how are the changes being communicated?

**Mr. David Manicom:** Sorry, is what being communicated?

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** The changes to the application process, the intake system.

**Mr. David Manicom:** The individuals whose applications were terminated were advised that their applications had been terminated. All of the information about how to apply for various programs is on our website. There was no specific communication to individuals whose applications were terminated, but it's all publicly available information. There's an application wizard, which helps walk

potential applicants through programs that might be available to them and for which they might qualify.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** You have 30 seconds.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** I have 30 seconds, so I'll just go right back to one question that you may not be able to answer and you might need to send to us as well.

With respect to the EOI again, could you please let us know what date the criteria will be made public? If it's your colleague who's not here who can provide that, please provide that in writing.

**Mr. David Manicom:** That date is not yet known.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** It's not yet known? So maybe, when it is known, is it possible for CIC to forward that to the committee?

**Mr. David Manicom:** Yes. The criteria under which CIC will make draws from the expression of interest pool will be through ministerial instructions, which are all published in the *Canada Gazette*.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Thank you. Sorry about that, but your time is over.

Mr. McCallum, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Thank you very much.

And thank you to the officials for being here.

My first statement is a comment on a question. In view of the statement by the minister in the House a couple of weeks ago that the average overall waiting time or processing time was 12 months, it's interesting to look at page 11, where we see that the true number is 29 months overall, 37 months for family class, 53 months for parents and grandparents, which is exactly what I said at the time. So it's confirmed by the department's numbers, which is nice to see.

My first question has to do with parents and grandparents. I believe that, as of January 1, 5,000 new applicants will be allowed. My question is this. How long do you think it will take for those applications to be fully made? Some have said it will take a matter of hours, or at most a matter of days. Do you have any idea of the length of time it will take for those application spots to be filled?

• (1215)

**Mr. David Manicom:** We can't know for sure, sir. There are 5,000 applications, so it will probably be approximately 10,000 or 11,000 individuals. Because the program has been closed for new applications for some time, combined with the fact that the criteria for sponsoring parents and grandparents will have changed, that combination of factors makes it difficult to be certain. We would anticipate that, because of the closure for two years, the 5,000 cap will be met in a period of days or weeks. It's difficult to be certain, but it's a short period of time.

**Hon. John McCallum:** With respect to the Philippines, I think it's great that Immigration is facilitating things, but I also think the devil is in the details. Similar action was taken for Haiti, and people from Haiti claim that very little happened. I believe your announcement said that the Filipino cases would be "prioritized" for people from "affected areas". Now that sounds reasonable, but also very vague. At some point will we know how many additional people from the Philippines are actually let in as a consequence of this, whether it means that specific waiting times will be dramatically reduced for family members, and so on?

**Ms. Diane Burrows:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to that question, sir. Yes, the department is working very hard at this point across our network—which is of course illustrated on page 2 of the diagram—in Canada and overseas to identify the applications, or the interest of people to apply, people who have been in the affected areas. We have identified specific parts of the Philippines according to the DFATD's affected areas information, so we're working in a consistent manner on identifying the affected area.

People have been asked, on our website and through various statements by the minister, to identify themselves or relatives who may be in the affected area and to contact Citizenship and Immigration Canada either through a web form that's available on the website or through the call centre where there's a priority number to make the contact. Or, if someone is in the Philippines, they can also do so through the mission e-mail. There's indeed a lot of work going on at the mission level to cull through applications and, in the case of processing centres in Canada, to cull through the application process to do exactly that and put them to the front.

**Hon. John McCallum:** I do commend you for the initiative, but I think there's a certain amount of cynicism about how effective it will be. At some point will you report to Canadians, to the public, what the impact of this speeding up has been and how many people have been allowed in who otherwise would not have been?

**Ms. Diane Burrows:** I certainly hope that will be the case, sir. That would be something I think we would put forward to the minister for consideration. We're prepared to do that.

**Hon. John McCallum:** This is my last question because I think I am running out of time.

Recently, in the Canadian experience class there are a number of occupations that people can no longer use to apply, such as international foreign students. I think many tens of thousands of such students came here in the expectation that they could apply, and now all of a sudden the carpet is pulled out from under them and they cannot. I guess my question is whether that is fair, whether there couldn't be some grandfathering initiative to allow an opportunity to apply to those who are already here and who perhaps came here partly because they would have a chance to become permanent residents.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** You have 10 seconds to reply. We're short of time.

• (1220)

**Mr. David Manicom:** There are a small number of occupations that are not open for application in the Canadian experience class for 2014. Those may change in the future. Those occupations were closed because we had a largely disproportionate number of those

specific occupations in the case inventory and wanted to ensure a more reasonable balance between occupations so that the program wasn't dominated by several occupations.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Thank you very much for answering so quickly. It's very appreciated.

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor for seven minutes.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Thank you, Madame Chair.

Mr. Lamarche seems to be lonely here. Very briefly, most of my questions are for Mr. Manicom, but I want to get him engaged in the conversation here.

**Mr. David Manicom:** No, that's okay.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** I read somewhere—and I couldn't find it again—that 80% of Canadians currently have a passport. Is that a fact?

**Mr. Jean-Pierre Lamarche (Director General, Passport Program Management and Strategic Initiatives, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** We'll soon be reaching 70%.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Seventy percent. So this is gospel if it's coming from you, I'm sure.

**Mr. Jean-Pierre Lamarche:** Yes.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Thank you very much; that's a clarification.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Mr. Manicom, I'm new to this committee so you can imagine what kind of a learning curve I've had here; the immigration file is above and beyond. You've been very helpful in my learning curve. I'll tell you why. First of all, when I started to study the file—and I knew this before but I started to study it in more depth—I realized that six or seven years ago we had almost a million people in a backlog, people wanting to get into this country. Now I understand it's down in the neighbourhood of somewhere around 600,000. I wondered how in hell this was accomplished. What a dramatic turnaround. Then you said—I think I have this quite accurately—that since 2006 ambitious rounds of improvements and innovation had taken place in immigration. I think that was in your opening comments. Can you tell me what those improvements and innovations were to take that backlog almost down 50%. What have you done?

**Mr. David Manicom:** There were two primary tools. One was the elimination of old applications in the federal skilled worker program, which, of course, is very unfortunate for the particular affected individuals but was a decision that the government took to situate the program going forward so that it could provide fast and efficient processing.



The other thing the government did, starting three or four years ago, was to manage intake into the programs. Rather than have an open-ended approach and, if you will, continue to sell tickets on full airplanes, the government began to manage through a cap system the number of applications received in some of our programs. We have not applied such caps to some programs, such as the most immediate family reunifications of spouses and minor children. It has involved some targeted programs where we've imposed those caps so that when someone applies we start processing it.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** There are a couple of specific areas where I'm really impressed with how well the immigration department under the current government has increased total family immigration, from 145,000 under the former government to where it's now up to 166,000. These are the average annual admissions. What do you contribute to that? How come we've increased that by something like 15%? How are you managing to do so much more?

**Mr. David Manicom:** As I'm not sure I can share your figure there, sir, I'm looking at—

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Total family immigration has gone from 145,000 to more 166,000. This is your average over the last six years.

**Mr. David Manicom:** I believe the average is around 60,000, sir.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** You say 60,000. That's not the number I have.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Those are your [*Inaudible—Editor*] numbers, which are often wrong.

**Mr. David Manicom:** Looking at slide 11, we can see that the family class in 2012 brings in around 64,000 individuals.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Okay, what was it in past years?

**Mr. David Manicom:** There has been an increase in the last couple of years, last year and this year, because of the accumulated backlog in the parent and grandparent portion of the family class. The government significantly increased the planning range for that program. While new applications so that we could work through the existing inventory, the government also significantly increased the space available for parents and grandparents last year and this year, leading to an increase.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Okay. Now, hopefully, these figures are accurate. The backlog in the skilled workers program went from 487,000 under the previous government to currently 335,000. Is that right?

**Mr. David Manicom:** No, the current backlog in the federal skilled worker program, sir, is in the order of scale of 65,000 or 70,000.

• (1225)

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Is that's all it is?

**Mr. David Manicom:** Yes. Again, we could provide the committee with the exact figure, but it's that order of scale.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Currently, that's all it is.

Okay, what about the reduced processing time for the skilled workers applications? How long does that take? I understood it used to be five years and now it's under a year.

**Mr. David Manicom:** It's about a year for the most recently received applications, that is, applications that weren't part of the old

inventory. The numbers on the table here combine all applications and the ones being finalized in 2012, and some of them are parts of the old inventory. So going forward in that program, we will see a significant continuing decline because we've almost eliminated that inventory, as I've said. Practically now it's a working inventory; there's really no wait backlog. Going forward we will see processing times for that whole group of about 12 months or so.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Or less.

Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ayala, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Ms. Paulina Ayala:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have questions about two topics that I care enormously about: refugees and workers selected to immigrate to Canada.

With respect to refugees, I just want to give Syrians as an example. The government reported that Canada was going to host 1,300 Syrian refugees, but that Ottawa would only commit to taking care of 200 of them. The others would have to be taken care of by a group of individuals or corporations that would be responsible for their integration. Those sponsors are from the private sector. But it doesn't say how long those sponsors have to meet the refugees' needs. It seems to me that it used to be for two years.

Now, on page 5 of the document, the paragraph titled "Resettlement from Outside Canada" indicates that "Private sponsors are groups or corporations that have signed an agreement with Canada's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. In this agreement, they promise..." and so on. But how long are they committed? There's no answer; it isn't clear.

The second part of my question has to do with integrating and hosting immigrants. When people apply on their own, it's because they are already independent. However, people who come to Canada as refugees have experienced fairly violent situations in their country of origin. So they are in a state of shock and everything that entails.

Budget 2013 cuts funding to community agencies that host refugees. Hosting these refugees involves the government, the province, but there are the community agencies as well. Has the department provided anything in the budget to help these agencies that host immigrants? Often these agencies are the ones that go and find French or English courses for newcomers and help them find a school for their children. They also seek psychological help for those who need it.

The problem is that these organizations are no longer receiving assistance. What measures is the Department of Citizenship and Immigration going to take in that respect? Then I'll come back to my question about workers.

**Mr. David Manicom:** I'm not sure I fully understood your first question. Unfortunately, we don't have an expert on settlement programs with us today.

The budgetary envelope for settlement programs for this fiscal year is about \$900 million. We have specialized programs in all regions of Canada to meet the needs of immigrants, particularly to integrate refugees. We also have special psychological programs for people who have been tortured and so on. There is a whole range of programs. If the committee would like, we can set up an information session on hosting programs. There are a lot of them, and about \$900 million has been allocated for those programs.

**Ms. Paulina Ayala:** Okay, but what proportion of that money is for community agencies, which are the first ones to host these refugees? If these amounts end up in large institutions and...

**Mr. David Manicom:** Almost the whole amount.

**Ms. Paulina Ayala:** That isn't what we're seeing in our ridings. These agencies are scraping by and have no money. Their budgets were cut, and they don't even have enough money to pay their employees the minimum wage of \$10 an hour. I would like some more information about that.

How long do private sector businesses acting as sponsors have to commit to refugees? There is a category of private sponsors for hosting refugees. It isn't specified in the document.

Madam Chair, how much time do I have left?

• (1230)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** You have 50 seconds.

**Ms. Paulina Ayala:** Fine.

I'm wondering about the new category of workers who are immigrating to Canada. In the Australian model, the employer sponsors these newcomers and the employees. Does Canada also have this kind of employer sponsorship? How long are newcomers required to work for employers who selected them?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Please make your answer very brief.

**Mr. David Manicom:** The expression of interest system aims to ensure that employers seeking employees know the applicants' background. If the employer can get a positive labour market opinion, the employer can add it to the immigrant's file to facilitate selection. Once accepted as a permanent resident, a person is not

required to continue working for a specific employer. That's how it is for temporary workers, but not for permanent residents.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Thank you, Mr. Manicom.

[English]

Mr. Weston, you have the floor for five minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank our guests for being here and for showing such solid knowledge of these fairly complex statistics.

I would like us to look at three very important parts of the immigration program. First, there are the labour needs. Our minister told us two days ago that we must use immigration to meet our needs because there is a great shortage of workers here in Canada.

Second, Mr. Manicom said that integrating our immigrants was obviously very important.

Third, there's the decrease in backlogs. Unless I'm mistaken, the previous Liberal government reduced immigration by 32%, but in the past five years, we've increased it by 7%, which shows that this government is taking this file seriously, when it comes to labour needs.

You said that integration was a good thing and that it was obvious. However, for 13 years, the Liberal government froze settlement services. Here, we've seen an increase in settlement services.

There's also the backlog of skilled workers. We've seen a significant improvement. There were 487,000 people previously, but you just told us that the figure is now 65,000 people.

If these bold changes had not happened, what would have happened to the immigration program?

Mr. Manicom, could you respond?

[English]

**Mr. David Manicom:** It's a challenging question for a public servant to answer.

Specifically, I can respond that it is correct that the overall settlement funding envelope did increase very dramatically from about \$200 million to \$600 million between 2005 and 2006. That's not counting the settlement funds provided to Quebec, which bring the total up to about \$900 million.

I could confirm that had we not taken steps to begin to manage application intake, the application backlogs, which were approaching a million individuals, would have continued to grow, and by this time would have been much higher than that. Those are factual answers I can provide.

I'd also note that the levels plans for the last six years have seen a focus on economic immigration and a focus on those parts of the labour market that are at most need. In managing intake in the federal skilled-worker program, for example, we also prioritized certain occupations that are in most demand in the economy at this time.

• (1235)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** You have one minute.

[Translation]

**Mr. John Weston:** Perhaps I'm a little naive, because it may be difficult for all the parties to agree even when there are important things like the changes we're seeing. However, are you able to comment on the future? What can we do to reach a joint response from all parties to continue to make these kinds of beneficial changes?

[English]

**Mr. David Manicom:** Madam Chair, I'm not sure it is my role to propose policy initiatives that would obtain support across the political spectrum. That's a difficult question for a public servant to answer.

[Translation]

**Mr. John Weston:** Thank you once again for the excellent service you provided.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Thank you, Mr. Weston and Mr. Manicom.

[English]

Mr. Leung, you have the next five minutes.

The floor is yours.

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

Following Mr. Menegakis' line of questioning, it was said that in the old system we did not have a way to cap the intake and yet we have to manage the output, the application.

With the current EOI system, how does that effectively manage a cap on the intake?

**Mr. David Manicom:** The future EOI system?

**Mr. Chungsen Leung:** In the future system, yes.

**Mr. David Manicom:** We foresee establishing an electronic pool of interested individuals who meet a set of defined criteria with regard to their human capital, language skills, work experience, education, and so forth. The number of persons in the pool is not the number of people you have to process; there's no obligation to process them. Government would extend invitations to apply to the priority individuals in the pool. For example, you could extend invitations to apply to those with the highest number of points against the federal skilled worker grid, for those who have employment offers in priority occupations and things like that. But you would only extend the number of invitations to apply that you had capacity to process. Effectively, you would create a situation where you could do just-in-time processing. You could issue  $x$  number of invitations to apply per month based on the levels plan

and the processing capacity so that when the applications arrive at the department they are put into processing immediately.

**Mr. Chungsen Leung:** Unlike the previous system where I believe there was a policy to process every application to its conclusion, either acceptance or rejection, we now have a way of capping the inflow such that we select the best candidate for immigration.

How does this apply across the board, for instance, through family unification and other categories like refugees and political asylum seekers? Would they also have to go in through the inventory?

**Mr. David Manicom:** No. That's not foreseen.

The expression of interest model is not yet in place. It will be another year and there will be lots of policy development and fine-tuning to do. But we foresee it as a tool for selecting the best of the best, if you will, in the economic categories. There has been no stated intention of government to use the expression of interest application management system in our family or humanitarian programs.

**Mr. Chungsen Leung:** If I can digress from our immigration system to multiculturalism, Canada has one of the most successful multicultural policies in the world. We encourage integration and the building of a diverse economy with diverse ethnicities from around the world.

Have we given any thought to how we will be able to leverage our diverse population so that they then are our best trade, cultural, and linguistic ambassadors to build Canada's trading links and Canada's goodwill around the world.

• (1240)

**Mr. David Manicom:** I'm afraid I don't have expertise on our multiculturalism program, so I can only give a very general answer to your question, sir.

All of the government's multiculturalism programs, and indeed our settlement programs and the significant increase in settlement funding of late, are designed to ensure that immigrants are fully participating members of Canadian society. Our multiculturalism programs are designed clearly to ensure that all Canadians benefit from the rich backgrounds of numerous cultures living harmoniously within Canada.

Certainly, the Department of Foreign Affairs, as part of its mandate works hard to take advantage of those people-to-people linkages through alumni networks and other diaspora-related programs in the countries abroad, so those people-to-people ties rebound to Canada's maximum benefit.

**Mr. Chungsen Leung:** In my experience of other multicultural societies around the world, there often tends to be this siloing effect of the various ethnic cultures. How do we effectively manage to prevent those siloing effects of the cultures building their own silos within our society?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** I'm sorry, Mr. Manicom, but we don't have time for an answer.

I'm sorry, Mr. Leung.

I'll now give the floor to Madam Sitsabaiesan for five minutes.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you again everybody.

I'm going to look at a recent review of the parent and grandparent program. The government released a backgrounder on its action plan for faster family reunification. The 2013 annual report states:

The Department explored ways to redesign the program to avoid future backlogs, while remaining sensitive to fiscal constraints, bearing in mind Canada's generous public health-care system and other social benefits.

This was on page 11.

What is the expected impact of these changes on the health and social security of our immigrant seniors? And will anything be done to ensure that new Canadians are reunited with their elderly loved ones?

**Mr. David Manicom:** I don't think the changes being made to the sponsorship requirements of the parent and grandparent category would have a direct impact on the health of sponsored immigrants under that category, given that all permanent residents have full access to Canadian medical care and so forth. The changes in the proposed new regulations do increase the financial requirements for sponsorship. The regulations have been pre-published and have not yet seen final publication. So based on the pre-published regulations, that will ensure there is adequate financial support for persons sponsored under the category. And the pre-published regulations also propose an extension of the sponsorship period from 10 years to 20 years, again to ensure that elderly individuals coming to Canada and obtaining permanent resident status have that full support from their family members.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** And when we're talking about health, we're also looking at mental health, I'm assuming.

**Mr. David Manicom:** Again, immigrants under that category, like all permanent residents, have access to the gamut of Canadian programs.

I don't believe I answered your second question about ensuring family reunification.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Right.

**Mr. David Manicom:** Canada has never had an open-ended immigration levels plan. We have managed and established priorities between immigration categories for many decades.

What happened in the parent and grandparent program was that for many years we accepted far more applications than space allocated under the levels plan. So we were taking 35,000 to 40,000 person applications per year and allotting level space of 15,000 to 20,000. I can't anticipate what the future levels will be in the parent and grandparent program, but last year, and again this year, the government set the levels plan at 25,000, which is the highest in many years.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** But that was of course during the moratorium of applications for parent and grandparent class.

● (1245)

**Mr. David Manicom:** That's right. It was to ensure that we weren't taking applications that we would not be able to process for many years.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Following up on that, how does the government plan to prevent any future backlogs for families attempting to reunite here in Canada with their parents and grandparents? I ask because I'm talking to people in the community and they're waiting for that moratorium to end. On day one, there are going to be 10,000 applications coming from Scarborough—Rouge River. I'm sure that all other 307 constituencies will have similar situations. What are we doing to prevent backlogs in the future?

**Mr. David Manicom:** For 2014, the government has established an intake cap of 5,000 cases, so 10,000 to 11,000 individuals. The backlog is much smaller than it was. It was 160,000 persons. It's going to be around 80,000 by the end of the year, but that's still a significant backlog. And depending on levels going forward, that backlog will represent at least several or three or four years' worth of processing. So taking a large number of applications in 2014 would simply doom individuals to long waiting times. So we want to continue to manage down that backlog so that in future those applications that we do decide to accept, based on the levels planned, will be processed rapidly.

The government also introduced a longer stay temporary resident visa, which it called the super visa, that provides individuals with multiple-entry visas valid up to 10 years and the ability to stay in Canada for up to 2 years at a time without renewing their status.

[Translation]

**Ms. Paulina Ayala:** The bill indicates that the minister may communicate personal information, that he may give direction, that he may rescind them, and so on. In this bill, changes are made in the process and regulations through departmental directions. Personally, I find that very concerning because we are giving someone else the power that we have, as legislators, to make legislation. We are in the process here of legislating from regulations, and that's a concern. Do you have anything to say about that?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** I'm sorry, Ms. Ayala, but your time is up.

[English]

Mr. Shory, you have the floor.

**Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Why, thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, witnesses.

I am a guest here today after not sitting on this committee for a while.

Mr. Manicom, I believe you have been around more than any of the members here—or at least you understand the system better than me, I would say. Based on your knowledge of the system, do the changes recently made by our government have any positive impact on processing times, or the quality of immigration? We are trying to match the demand of the day. For example, we dealt with foreign credential recognition, which is my issue. Does that have a positive impact on our Canadian society?

Another issue is fraud marriages, or marriages of convenience. All those changes that were introduced in recent years, do they have any positive impact on our Canadian society?

**Mr. David Manicom:** That's a very broad question. I'm not sure how much time I should take to answer it, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Devinder Shory:** She'll cut me off soon.

**Mr. David Manicom:** Certainly, a number of changes made in recent years, we think, have enhanced the timeliness and efficiency of our economic categories, particularly in managing intake in such a way as to be able to process applications more quickly. In recent years, we've also introduced the Canadian experience class to take maximum advantage of international students and other temporary foreign workers who have already demonstrated success in the Canadian labour market. This enables them to apply under a program that has very fast processing.

We've taken a number of steps to combat marriages of convenience. It's a great challenge in many of our missions abroad. I've worked in several of them—China, India, Russia, and Pakistan. The vast majority of marriages are genuine, but there is a significant amount of abuse of that program. Government has taken a number of steps in recent years to combat that, including a five-year bar on sponsoring someone else if you've been sponsored to Canada, and a two-year conditional status for people in new relationships, which requires them to maintain that relationship for a two-year period. Those are some of the changes that I think touch on your questions.

•(1250)

**Mr. Devinder Shory:** Let's talk about this Typhoon Haiyan . Almost 10,000 Filipino community members live in my riding of Calgary Northeast, which is the hardest-working riding in Canada.

I'd like one of you to expand on the special immigration measures that Citizenship and Immigration Canada is taking to help those who wish to immigrate to Canada from that region.

**Ms. Diane Burrows:** Our first priority on this point is to listen to the family members and other persons related to persons in Canada who have been afflicted or affected personally by the situation and are from the affected areas.

In some cases, our people on the ground are going out with delegations in the field to the most affected areas, basically day in, day out, to see if they can find people: in the first instance, Canadians who have been reported missing. They're also working with lists to see if there's anybody who needs to be reached. This has happened for a couple of days now, and we're trying to do it in concert; it's being managed out of the mission.

Otherwise, away from the mission, we're trying to provide good answers about the situation, about getting people the right information they need to make applications to us. We're looking at

basically the whole gamut—i.e., if anybody wants to ask us a question, how do we help them to get the outcomes they need?

Where we're maybe less.... We are screening, because we're not necessarily facing at the first instance the situation of people who would be outside the affected area, or people who may want to assist people, but we're helping them to make the right connections.

Our first priority is the family members of permanent residents, of citizens, and then looking at the persons who are temporarily in Canada working, for example, who have family members in the Philippines in the affected areas.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Thank you very much. The time has expired.

Madam Block, you will be the last one to speak. You have five minutes.

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I am not a regular member of this committee, but certainly I welcome the opportunity to be here. I know that all members of Parliament typically deal with these issues back home in our ridings and in our offices. That's really where the questions come from that I'm going to ask.

Over the past number of years that I've been a member of Parliament, I've seen a dramatic increase in the number of constituents we are serving, newcomers coming to the city of Saskatoon, certainly settling in my riding. They come to us with a number of issues, be it sponsoring a family member or family members to come to Canada, or looking to become permanent residents.

Not only are they coming to talk to us about these issues, but we also have constituents who have tended to start to look at our office as a resource. They look at our office as a resource not only for immigration issues but also for travelling abroad. One of the ways we have sought to provide service to our constituents is to hold passport clinics, where we give individuals a bit of an understanding with regard to what may be required. We often help them with their applications.

I know that our government introduced the ePassport, which is the 10-year passport that provides a lot more convenience, I think, to Canadians and that continues to facilitate secure and safe travel.

I wonder if you could just expand a little bit on the benefits we are seeing with this passport, and maybe give us a bit of an understanding with regard to how many 10-year passports you have seen Canadians apply for.

**Mr. Jean-Pierre Lamarche:** Thanks for your question.

The ePassport started to be available to Canadians in February 2012. As of July 1 last summer, on Canada Day, five-year and 10-year ePassports were made available to all Canadians.

Since then, we've issued more than a million 10-year ePassports. I can report that close to 80% of the passports issued are 10-year ePassports.

We used to have only a five-year passport. When we looked at our international partners, the international community was moving toward 10 years. We took the opportunity to have a more robust passport book and to move to 10 years along with our international partners.

I don't know if that answers your question or if you'd like a bit more information.

• (1255)

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** I would just follow that up with something you said about the international community. So in fact, we implemented the 10-year passport because many other countries were doing that?

**Mr. Jean-Pierre Lamarche:** Well, the 10 years is the validity period that countries were using the most, but also, having the ePassport was very important, because with the ePassport right now Canadians can benefit from their passport when they're travelling because they don't need any.... We are one of the countries who need fewer visas to travel around the world, and the ePassport is becoming the international norm. With it we ensure that these countries will not require visas for Canadians to travel abroad.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe):** Thank you, Madam Block.

Once again, in the name of this committee, Mr. Manicom, Madame Burrows, Monsieur Lamarche, and Madame Imrie, thank you very much for your time. It is very much appreciated.

With that, I declare this meeting adjourned.

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