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Chair

Mr. David Tilson

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•(1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)): Ladies and gentlemen, we'll call the meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. It's meeting number 5 on Tuesday, November 26, and we are studying the temporary resident visas for visitors.

We have three witnesses before us this morning.

The first is famous. He's Professor Mel Cappe, and for those of you who don't know, he was Clerk of the Privy Council, he was a deputy minister, and the last time I met him I addressed him as commissioner, because we had lunch. He probably doesn't remember me.

Professor Mel Cappe (University of Toronto, School of Public Policy and Governance, As an Individual): I do.

The Chair: I doubt if he does, but we had lunch at Grosvenor Square in London. I happened to be on the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association. The president at that time was Senator Lorna Milne. You kindly briefed us on issues in the United Kingdom, and I thought it a memorable time.

Prof. Mel Cappe: As did I.

The Chair: Indeed.

Thank you for coming to the meeting, sir.

We have David Goldstein, who is the president and chief executive officer of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada.

Good morning to you.

Finally, we have—I'm going to have an awful time, sir, and you'll have to help me here, but I'll apologize in pronouncing your name—Feridun Hamdullahpur.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Feridun Hamdullahpur.

The Chair: Good morning to you, sir. You're from the University of Waterloo, and you're president and vice-chancellor. You're also vice-chair of the U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities.

Thank you, the three of you, for coming to give us your views on things. You each have up to eight minutes. You don't have to take it, but you each have up to eight minutes to make a presentation to the committee, and then the committee will have questions.

I will advise the committee that this meeting will end at 12:25 p. m., at which time we will go in camera for committee business.

So away we go with...we'll start with you, sir.

Ms. Sitsabaiesan, I need your help again to pronounce his name.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Hamdullahpur.

The Chair: Mr. Hamdullahpur. Thank you, sir.

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur (President and Vice-Chancellor, Vice-Chair, U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities, University of Waterloo): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to start by thanking the members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration for inviting me to appear before you today. It's a pleasure to be here.

As vice-chair of the U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities, I would like to thank once again and extend my appreciation and U15's appreciation, and in general the entire Canadian university community's appreciation, for the work that Minister Alexander and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration did during the recent labour dispute. Their efforts ensured that with only a few exceptions, international students were able to be on campus and in class for the beginning of the semester. The arrival and continued ability of international students to attend Canadian universities are essential for our operations and for Canada's economy. A Department of Foreign Affairs report determined that international students contribute \$8 billion to the Canadian economy each year, by no means a small or insignificant number.

Today, I would like to focus on questions 1 and 3 of your committee's study, as neither my university nor the U15 have an opinion or issue regarding question 2. For the purposes of keeping to the eight minutes I have been provided to speak, I'm going to focus on two issues that speak to the integrity of the system: the classification of who are immigration representatives and the review of the international student program.

About two and a half years ago, the government enacted measures to strengthen the immigration and refugee identification processing system in Canada. The Government of Canada reduced the ability of organizations and individuals to defraud the system and applicants, a step wholly and completely supported by Canadian universities. An unforeseen, however, and unintended consequence of this action was that the department determined that university employees who provide immigration advice to international students or staff are considered to be paid immigration representatives and are therefore within the scope of section 91 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Under these provisions, individuals who receive a fee or other type of consideration for providing immigration advice must be authorized to do so. Authorized representatives must be one of the following: lawyers and paralegals who are members in good standing of a Canadian provincial or territorial law society; notaries who are members in good standing of the *Chambre des notaires du Québec*; or immigration consultants who are members in good standing of the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council, or, in short, ICCRC. University staff are considered to fall under this regulation.

This had an unfortunate effect of increasing the work of CIC personnel, since our staff were not able to provide information to potential international students. To better understand where a solution to this situation may lie, the government has asked AUCC, our sister association, to gather information on how the regulation has impacted our staff, including developing a list of what activities international student advisers can no longer undertake.

In addition, the AUCC has been encouraged to work with ICCRC to determine whether the organization would be willing to develop special educational programs targeted at university staff. We understand that the ICCRC is an arm's-length entity from the government, and I understand AUCC looks forward to working with them to address the unique nature of our situation while maintaining the integrity of our system.

• (1110)

The second issue I will mention in my presentation about the integrity of the system is the proposed regulatory changes to the international student program. It is our understanding that the new regulations are intended to improve programming integrity and accountability and to enhance Canada's reputation as a destination of choice for international students.

If implemented, key changes will include new requirements for international students to both attend a designated learning institution—this could be a university or college, any learning institution—and actively pursue studies while in Canada. So there are two requirements. One, they have to be registered with a learning institution, but the second one is even more important: they must pursue their studies while in Canada. Institutions will be required to take on a reporting role to support these changes. The nature of this role is still under discussion between the federal and provincial or territorial governments.

We are, as post-secondary education institutions, very supportive of any activity taken by the government to enhance our standing as a place to study, and we look forward to working with them on this initiative and on other potential elements of the international education strategy.

As for the third component of your investigation, I think it's important to note that our system has both strengths and weaknesses when it comes to our peer countries. I can tell you that there are many American businesses that are very envious of our PGWPP, or post-grad work permit program, which allows students to apply to study in Canada to find work after the completion of their studies.

In addition, I would be remiss if I did not mention the 2013 government announcement of \$42 million over the next two years to

be invested to support enhanced processing capacity with the temporary residents program. This includes study permit processing. This is very positive, and it is certainly news welcomed by my colleagues in the university sector.

Processing times for both study permits and temporary resident visas—for example, to attend interviews for faculty positions—continue to be a primary area of concern for universities. Average processing times, defined as the amount of time needed to process 80% of all cases within a given time period, vary significantly between visa offices and are impacted by staff resources and caseload complexity, such as incidence of fraud and level of security risk.

Among the top 15 source countries for international students, study permit processing times vary from as low as two weeks, for example, for India, to as many as 18 weeks in the case of students from Nigeria. I think it would be fair to say that Canada is somewhere in between, with visas being processed in around 60 days. That's a lot of time when we hear that Australians can get a student visa turned around in 20 days and the U.K. even less. I certainly think there's work we can do when it comes to speeding up the processing time, increasing the ability of students to apply online, or creating more streamlined parameters. We recognize that it is not an easy or quick process; however, we look forward to continue to work with the government on identifying best practices internationally, modifying them to work here, and doing our part to help make the system run more efficiently.

Again, Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for your time, and I look forward to your questions.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We now have Mr. Cappe—Professor Cappe, I'm sorry.

Prof. Mel Cappe: Thank you, Chair.

Indeed, I am now a professor in the School of Public Policy and Governance at the University of Toronto. My mother finally understands the nature of my titles.

[*Translation*]

I was the President of the Institute for Research on Public Policy in Montreal. I published several studies on the immigration system. Before that, I spent 30 years in the federal public service.

[*English*]

I want to make an important point. I served as deputy minister in several portfolios, never for Immigration, I might add, but when I was Clerk of the Privy Council and secretary to the cabinet and head of the public service, it was for the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien.

The Chair: We won't hold that against you, sir.

Prof. Mel Cappe: That is my point, Chairman. I wanted to note that I was first appointed to the ranks of deputy minister by the Progressive Conservative Mulroney government. I've spent my entire career being non-partisan, and I continue to be.

It's just to show my cred.

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Prof. Mel Cappe: Yes, I know you will.

[*Translation*]

After having worked for three and a half years as a clerk, as I told the chair, I went to London for four years, under the Chrétien, Martin, and Harper governments.

[*English*]

I'm not an expert in immigration, but I have looked at the system in various ways at different times, and my insights may help the committee.

I would recommend to the committee that you focus on three things. The first is the need to identify the objectives of the policy. You can't get at an effective system without understanding and unpacking the multiple objectives of the policy. The second is to take a risk management approach. You can't have zero risk in this business, so you have to try to manage the risk. The third is that the benefits of the policy or program overwhelm the cost, and you should know that there will be both to anything the government does—both benefits and costs.

On the objectives, there are many possible objectives to a temporary visa program. They include keeping out the sick, excluding and restricting access to criminals and terrorists, ensuring the people do not overstay their visitor welcome, avoiding the back door to immigration or refugee claim, or just raising revenue. Several countries use it to just raise revenue. Each of these would entail a different strategy or program to address it. Keep in mind, there are multiple objectives and they require multiple instruments.

On the risk management point, you'd think about stochastic events and the probabilistic events. You have to be prepared to accept that there will not be zero risk to meeting these objectives. You have to assess what the risks to meeting your objectives are and you have to decide if mitigation of these risk strategies may work or not. You have to be prepared to accept some failures. This is tough for politicians, I know. It's tough for everybody.

If your overwhelming objective is to limit the time in country, then exit controls look attractive. But they don't actually help you in worrying about the claims to refugee status. If you're worrying about refugee status, then the restriction of entry is preferred.

In all cases, you will exclude some people you do not want to exclude. There will be false negatives. And some people will get through the system, the filter that you have, and you would have preferred to exclude them. These are false positives. That means that you will inadvertently exclude some of the students Dr. Hamdullahpur wants to admit, or some of the tourists I'm sure Mr. Goldstein wants to admit. You will probably and probabilistically let through some of the people that the chiefs of police would like to keep out.

The fact that constituents bother MPs with complaints about the time taken or about rejections is not evidence of a failure of the system. If the system worked and kept out the right people, you would still have your constituents knocking on your door. You have

to interpret what the signal is when your constituents complain to you.

On the cost and benefits, there are inevitable costs of some of the solutions. You have to assess whether it's worth it or not.

If you will permit me a brief comment on administration, visa officers exercise significant discretion and authority. There's a demand to have an appeal process, and it may be warranted. But these decisions are not life-threatening or of dramatic significance. There is ultimately appeal before the Federal Court of Canada, under section 18, I believe.

However, the solution is more probably in providing the visa officers with administratively clear instructions and good training on how to administer their discretion and how to deliver the program. In that context, research will help in providing indicia of future performance and indications of what works and what does not. Relying on evidence to design a system is highly desirable. Evidence is not always used in policy development, and it should be in this case. Evaluation has been and will be helpful here. I know the committee has looked at the evaluations of the program.

• (1120)

Finally, in administration, I want to note that when I was head of mission in London, I was enormously impressed with the dedication and commitment of the staff, both locally engaged—this is one of the untold stories of Canada, that we have these foreign nationals who work for us, who do a brilliant and wonderful job—as well as the Canada-based staff who administer the system.

Let me just open a parenthesis on the question of the time taken, and Professor Hamdullahpur has made this point. Sometimes a decision, any decision, is better than waiting for the right decision. So if the objective is 14 days taken, sometimes it's better to get a decision you don't like that comes out quickly and removes uncertainty. Sometimes people prefer that to being held in limbo for 60 days or a year.

CIC has objectives that are stated as:

CIC has two main priorities in this area. First, we are committed to facilitating the travel of legitimate visitors to Canada, while at the same time protecting the health, safety, and security of Canadians.

These need not be inconsistent, but the instruments used to meet these multiple objectives must be tailored for purpose and based on evidence.

In conclusion, it is essential that you be clear, deliberate, and transparent about the objectives of your visa policy. It is necessary to take a risk management approach to your programs to address these objectives, and you should take account explicitly of the costs of your initiatives and minimize them to the extent valuable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, I hope my remarks will be useful to the committee.

I am now ready to answer your questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Cappe.

Mr. Goldstein.

[Translation]

Mr. David Goldstein (President and Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Industry Association of Canada): Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to participate in your important study on this subject.

[English]

Again, for the record, my name is David Goldstein. I'm the president and CEO of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, representing the full cross-section of Canada's travel and tourism sector, with a focus on growing Canada's international competitiveness as a global destination.

Our sector generates annual revenues of \$82 billion to the Canadian economy. We employ over 600,000 people in every riding in the country, including over 204,000 Canadians aged 25 and under, making our sector the largest employer of young Canadians.

Generating \$17.4 billion last year in international currency exchange, travel continues to be Canada's largest service export sector. Not only are we a significant export sector in and of ourselves, but a recent report from Deloitte demonstrated that there's a direct correlation between travel and trade and that countries that experience more joint travel experience higher levels of trade and investment.

The travel and tourism industry in Canada is in no means in dire straits, but it is in need of a course correction to seize growth opportunities for today and ensure stability for the future. The good news is that receipts were up over 7% last year, outpacing the Canadian economy, but this masks a very disturbing overreliance on our Canadian domestic market. Currently, 80% of travel revenue is derived from Canadian travellers travelling within Canada, which is up from 65% just a decade ago. Furthermore, our overreliance on the domestic market is at risk, as brand U.S.A. and other countries' tourism marketing boards are significantly increasing their marketing investments to the Canadian traveller.

The good news is that the global opportunity is enormous. Travel and tourism is outpacing nearly every other sector of the global economy, but Canada is lagging behind. Last year, Canada's inbound visitor growth was only 1.7%, which is less than half the global average of 4%. Simply keeping pace with global growth of 4% would have added half a billion dollars to our economy and over \$150 million in additional government revenues.

In order to get to the 4% international average, Canada needs a balanced strategy that focuses on higher-volume mature markets, primarily the U.S. and western Europe, and the high-growth emerging markets, including China, India, Mexico, and Brazil.

While over 80% of our export revenue and travellers still come from countries without visas, the fastest-growing markets are the ones that do require visas, making visitor visas akin to export permits. In fact, China alone has become the fourth largest inbound source market for Canada, with inbound visitation growing on average over 20% per year, reaching 288,000 visitors in 2012. Since signing the approved destination status agreement with China in 2010, Canada has seen almost 100,000 more visitors per year, which is a 48% increase. Treating these visitors as temporary residents just doesn't make sense.

While we agree that there needs to be a balance between economic activity and safety, we also agree that Canada needs to be mindful of its immigration system. Canada does not have the illegal immigration problem, in our view, that many western countries do. And the government has taken recent measures to expedite the refugee status system, which will thwart illegitimate claims.

In a recent white paper entitled "Gateway to Growth: Progress Report on Canadian Visitor Visa Process", produced in conjunction with the Canadian Tourism Commission, we have outlined some of the key improvements that have taken place over the last three years, including the introduction of 10-year multi-entry visas and an increase in the number of visa application centres. However, demand in key emerging markets is outpacing capacity, and we are becoming increasingly uncompetitive on the world stage.

To that end, our paper makes several key recommendations to cut red tape and streamline our visitor visa system, and we hope the committee will consider these as part of the study.

Broad recommendation number one is the reduction of red tape. That includes waiving visa requirements for Mexico and Brazil, visa transferability from expired passports to new passports so we can maximize the use of 10-year multi-entry visas, and the introduction of paperless visas through an electronic travel authorization program.

Recommendation number two is to optimize existing security infrastructure, including the potential of a Canada-U.S. reciprocal visa program and a transit without visa program or pilot with Canada's major hub airports.

Recommendation number three is to reinvest in the visa process. TIAC was encouraged, in last year's federal budget, with the announcement of a two-year investment of \$42 million to increase visa capacity. But this will barely keep up with demand, especially in markets like China. We recommend that a small percentage of the revenues earned by visas, upwards of \$400 million per year, be reinvested in building visa capacity in the system.

● (1125)

In conclusion, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, it should be noted that in 2002 Canada ranked seventh in the world in inbound visitation. In 2012, we ranked 16th. We believe that breaking down the barriers and aggressively promoting the Canadian brand internationally will allow us to surpass the international average of 4% visitor growth and enable Canada to get back into the top 10 by 2017.

We appreciate the time to be with you, and we look forward to your questions this morning.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Goldstein.

We will start the first round with Mr. Menegakis.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to our witnesses for appearing before us today. Mr. Cappe, welcome back to the Hill. I'm sure it feels like home to you, and it's nice to see you here.

Mr. Goldstein, Mr. Hamdullahpur, thank you so much for joining us today.

Mr. Goldstein, we know that measures such as biometrics, information sharing, and electronic travel authority make it easier, safer, and faster to travel to Canada without compromising security. It's a key focus of our government and our immigration system to ensure that people coming to Canada do not pose any threats to Canadians, but we always try to reach a balance between security and tourism.

Do you believe that it reaches the right balance between security and the need for tourism?

• (1130)

Mr. David Goldstein: I think we have the right balance. All of my colleagues have expressed today the need to further efficiency and use our resources well.

As to Mr. Cappe's point, I think we have to do the proper risk assessment market by market.

I should state for the record that we're fairly agnostic about the issues, when you consider them broadly. We take the view that there are certain markets where both the federal government and industry have focused our economic attention, and therefore there isn't a one-size-fits-all process for different countries of different sizes.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

We've also been provided with a report called "Tourism Jobs and Businesses, Stats Can, Summer 2011". I believe you provided this report to us?

Mr. David Goldstein: Yes, that's just a list of the tourism, businesses, and jobs per riding.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Well, let me just say I'm encouraged to see that in my riding of Richmond Hill there are 746 businesses employing some 5,940 people. I'm encouraged to see that, particularly because we're nestled in the heart of the greater Toronto area. It's nice to see that this statistic places us somewhere in the middle of the tourism industry in Canada.

In your report "Gateway to Growth" you said that the processing times and rejection rates continue to be cited as one of the biggest challenges for business and leisure travel. What progress has been made in this respect?

Mr. David Goldstein: The good news is we've been able to implement things like a 10-year, multi-entry visa that is increasingly being used, especially among business travellers. I think we have pockets of concerns in different parts of the world. One of the other members of the panel spoke of predictability and our competitive-

ness against other jurisdictions like Australia, which has moved well ahead of us in electronic processing.

There's nothing more frustrating for applicants than to go to a visa application centre or to a consulate and leave all of their personal documents, without any idea of what the process is or when they're going to get an answer. There has to be a way in this modern age to streamline the process. Other jurisdictions have implemented best practices in that area.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Do you have any recommendations on how we can tackle some of these challenges?

Mr. David Goldstein: We have several. Part of it is simply a resource issue. Define the markets that have the biggest issue. In our view, Mexico and Brazil present less of a threat or risk. You will always require some sort of visa from countries like China and India. But you should be able to deploy resources in that market, and centrally as well to deal with the demand.

Part of our concern is the lack of reinvestment in the actual operation. Even with that important investment of \$42 million in the last budget, when you see incremental increases of 20% a year from China, you realize you're never going to be able to keep up with that demand. Only some sort of sliding scale that allows you to deploy resources in that way will get you even with the demand.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

The visa application centres are independent and privately run centres around the world to help foreign nationals with the visa process. We will have gone from some 38 visa application centres in 19 countries in 2010 to 130 in 95 countries by March of next year.

In your opinion, have these visa application centres improved the visa system?

Mr. David Goldstein: The short answer is yes. You'll note that the report states that we are very pleased with that rollout, especially in markets like Brazil. There are still some operational concerns, but yes, of course, having more visa application centres in-market is very important.

We are constrained, for example, in China....

Oh, I'm sorry, you're short of time.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Go ahead.

Mr. David Goldstein: We have a concern in a market like China, where the Chinese government will actually limit the number of visa application centres you can deploy in that market.

So there's some work to do, but there has been great progress made.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Can you enlighten us with some improvements, perhaps, that you think we could make to the visa application centres?

Mr. David Goldstein: I believe you can centralize the processing model. If you have a secure document arrangement, either in the visa application centre or at the consulate, you can gather those materials from the consumer, give them back their materials, and go to a central operating location that could be anywhere—it could be in your riding, sir—where we're going through them and doing the risk assessment, and where we have a far more efficient system of generating those visas. The CIC is already doing some of that regionally, but I think we could be doing that nationally.

• (1135)

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you very much.

I noticed that in your recommendations you bring up the issue of the visas with Brazil and Mexico. There are issues, of course, and there are reasons why the visas were put in place, particularly with Mexico and the number of asylum claims we were getting. I think it's pretty well known that we have an issue of security concerns that we're trying to overcome, because obviously we deeply value our relationship with our partners.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cash.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank our guests for taking the time to be here today.

I wanted to follow up on a couple of your comments, Professor Cappe. You said in your comments that evidence is not always used in policy development. This flows from an article in the *Ottawa Citizen*, where you said it's a concern to you that ministers put forward ready-made policies with little or no contribution from the experts in the public service who are adept and proficient in analyzing issues and proposing solutions.

For starters, can you elaborate on what you perceive to be, in general, the kind of expertise you're referring to, how it's best utilized, and whether the current government is exploiting the full potential of that knowledge in the public service?

Prof. Mel Cappe: Well, let's take the issue before the committee at the moment. There was an evaluation done of the temporary visa program. The department has responded to the evaluation. It's identified improvements that it can make. All of that is the kind of use of evidence that I'm speaking about.

There are counter-examples that some people can point to, like the injection site in Vancouver, which the government had defunded, where all the evidence, the analysis that was done globally by public health authorities around the world, showed that such an initiative would actually reduce crime and reduce dependence on drugs. I know that public servants can marshal that evidence and present it to ministers and that the decision is ultimately a political one.

When someone says to me, "That was a purely political decision", I say bravo. The alternative to a political decision is what we observe in Syria. So I'm not suggesting that we abandon the discretion of politicians to make decisions like that. I want to make sure they're taking account of the information and evidence that's available on which to make a decision, and I think that's what the crucial element of this is.

Mr. Andrew Cash: You parse the difference between a solely political decision and decisions that are made in a larger sense that include the political dimension, but I do want to see if we can get a little further into issues in regard to immigration policy in general right now.

You've spoken to one example. Could you give us other examples where, in your view, we could see better use of the wisdom, expertise, and knowledge of the public service in these decisions?

Prof. Mel Cappe: I'm going to give you a very general and non-specific answer. I've been out of Ottawa now for 11 years, so it would be presumptuous of me to try to lecture, as a professor might, the committee.

I would note that the quality of the professional public service, the professional non-partisan public service—and that's why I made my opening remarks as I did, pointing to the fact that I had served different party governments—is actually very highly professional indeed.

When I look at where my students now go, many of them go to the Ontario public service, many to the federal public service. Some of them even go to work in Toronto for that public service—we can come back to that, perhaps. Those highly trained, sophisticated students with great analytical capacity are going to work in government in a way that actually is gratifying. I worry that if their advice isn't heard, they will stop wanting to go work in government. It's not that their advice should be taken. I've already made that point. In fact it was about three or four weeks ago when I met with President Hamdullahpur in Waterloo, talking about exactly the public policy program Waterloo has, which is creating bright, young people who will go into politics and go into public service. I think we need more of that, but if we want to keep that up, that article pointed out there is an adequate supply of ideas now, and we have to make sure there's a demand for those ideas.

• (1140)

The Chair: Stop the clock, please.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Stop the clock?

The Chair: Yes. I want to remind you, Mr. Cash.... I know Professor Cappe can talk about pretty well everything, but the topic before us is visas, not the civil service, so I suggest you direct your questions on the matter we're studying.

Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Professor Cappe, you have said you have been concerned that the additional cut announced in the throne speech would further reduce operating budgets as well as program expenditures of various departments. I'm wondering, as we see delays observed in processing these applications, if you make the connection there between the cuts and the delays.

Prof. Mel Cappe: Actually, I don't. I don't know enough about it to make that judgment. If you had the officers from the department here, they might be able to respond.

The other point I would make is that Mr. Goldstein's point about process improvements is very important. I know when the officials were before the committee in June, they talked about the online application system and all of that. Those kinds of improvements will actually save money.

You have to be closer to it to do the analysis of whether there's any link between that or not. I don't know where the department took its budget cuts and I don't know what the savings have been.

Mr. Andrew Cash: I wanted to get into a very quick question about the visa offices. Are you aware of the degree of guidance, for example, through feedback or guidelines, these visa officers receive from CIC about the use of their discretion? What we do hear is that there is a wide degree of discretion from office to office.

Prof. Mel Cappe: Indeed. I have just a modest window on that.

When I was in London, Mr. Orr, who appeared before the committee here, who now is assistant deputy minister responsible for operations, was at the time the head of the immigration section in London. So we had worked together. All I know or don't know may come from Mr. Orr.

I learned a lot about that discretion, and the kinds of training the visa officers get is actually quite good. They are given guidelines to follow. For some countries it's a medical assessment that's being made. For other countries they are looking for evidence of criminality in the background. In other countries they are looking for the family relationships that might induce people to stay over the time.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Cappe.

Mr. McCallum.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

It seems to me that if a small country like Canada is to compete with a big country like the United States, then we ought to be more nimble or more agile by virtue of our smallness. It seems to me that in some cases regarding immigration it's the opposite. We heard in the press diplomats from Mexico or Brazil, I believe, complaining that they had to fill out huge questionnaires about coming to Canada, questions about where their mother was born, ridiculous things like that. I spoke to people from Ukraine and they said it was extremely arduous to come to Canada. For the U.S., they can get something in their passport that gives them multiple entries for 10 years, so they can just come and go. It's the United States that had 9/11, not us, so they should, if anything, be more concerned about security than we are. Of course, we are, but the image is that they are more so, yet we seem to be slow and stodgy and unresponsive compared with the United States, which is a massive country.

I don't know if we can eliminate visa requirements for certain countries, but I totally agree on streamlining. It seems we have a long, long way to go. I guess I'd ask either Mr. Cappe or Mr. Goldstein if you agree with what I just said.

●(1145)

Mr. David Goldstein: I'm going to reiterate something that Mr. Cappe said, which is that it comes down to risk assessment. You have to get through the 90% or the 95% of people who aren't the problem, so you keep them out of the system, and you can do it on a fairly expedited basis. It's moving to forms like electronic travel authorization, it's getting our airport infrastructure into mechanisms like transit without visa—that's how we leap ahead. That's how we end up making best practices instead of following best practices.

Hon. John McCallum: Okay. I don't have much time, but do you agree with my assessment that in some areas of immigration the United States is being more nimble and agile and quicker than we are? I think that in itself is the problem.

Mr. David Goldstein: Mr. McCallum, sometimes when it comes to the security issue, we're trying to be more Catholic than the Pope.

Hon. John McCallum: Exactly.

My next question is about students. A lot of students come to Canada with the promise that they at least have a chance to apply to be a landed immigrant. Recently, having invested in coming here, having spent the time and money to be here, a whole lot of them were just told, "No, you're cut off. If you're in certain occupations, you cannot apply." I know we have to be concerned about jobs for Canadians as well, but it seems to me this is inherently unfair or a breaking of a contract to those foreign students. Maybe there could be some grandfather clause or something for those already here to have a chance, as opposed to just getting cut off.

I guess my related question is this. If the total number of hours of work are limited, would there be an advantage to letting foreign students work off campus instead of just on campus? Maybe it's not more hours in total, but I think it would broaden their experience without necessarily taking work from Canadians.

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: There are two elements to it. I believe at the University of Waterloo those students who come into our co-op programs can work anywhere. They have that work permit granted to them as they are admitted to the university. I don't see that part of our competitiveness as a big issue. I believe Canada has a very good program in place right now to enable our graduates to stay in Canada and find employment. If they are happy with their employment and if the employers are happy with them, they can extend their stay in Canada.

The issue goes back to the ability of attracting absolutely the top students and the top talent to come to Canada. The world out there is so competitive right now. You gave a very good example of the United States. We can no longer afford to stay in our offices and expect that those very high-quality, talented students and faculty members will come here. We need to be out there very aggressively making sure that they will see Canada as a place where they can live safely and happily, advance their careers, and raise their families here. For that, I think we need to make sure that we expedite their process and provide them with a very welcoming attitude to come to Canada. As Mr. Goldstein put it, 95% to 96% or 98% of them have absolutely no issues whatsoever that we should worry about on their background or security.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Leung.

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

Mr. Hamdullahpur, I wish to follow through on the question that my colleague Mr. McCallum mentioned.

I would have thought that a foreign student coming to Canada, especially for post-secondary education, would be looking more at the research capability, the reputation of a university, perhaps job prospects after their education here. That is different from the fact that Canada is quite generous in allowing them to apply for permanent residence, eventually on a pathway to citizenship.

The question I wish to ask you is, would it be expedient for us if the university that does the pre-screening of these students, just by admitting them, at the same time says, all right, if you're here for a four-year program...? They can actually stay for those four years and it becomes a multiple-entry visa for that period.

Is that the case right now, or do they have to reapply for the visa every year?

• (1150)

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: It used to be the case, but I don't think it any longer is the case. They do not have to reapply to come back to Canada after every year.

We were behind in this, and for that reason students were preferring to go to the United States or other places, because those places only needed it once. But I think that has been corrected.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: That's a good thing.

Has that helped the situation with our students?

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: It has, yes.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Let me then turn to Mr. Goldstein for my next question.

We have spoken before about the temporary resident visa being this big basket of things that I would say tends to illogically label the types of visitors who come to Canada. People come to Canada as students, as tourists, as business persons. For expediency, would not the best practice be for the business person to have a 5-year multiple visa or a 10-year multiple visa. For a tourist visa we would limit it to 30 days, and for the student it would be for the length of their course of study.

You mentioned trusted traveller status. That requires a change and a significant investment in our whole entry and exit control, as with the NEXUS program with the United States, and the fingerprinting and iris scanning that I've experienced in Singapore and Japan.

Would you share your thoughts with us on how we can improve that?

Mr. David Goldstein: You're absolutely right.

The key is to get as many people out of the line as possible. Multi-entry visas are probably the best way to do that, and trusted traveller programs and electronic travel authorization.

It's effectively pre-screening people before they get on planes to come here in a more efficient manner. I think you can set up different criteria. I would worry that we could set up too many criteria. If there are too many categories to fall under, it might make things more cumbersome. But I do think there is a role for that segmentation.

Let's be frank. We have a trading partner in the United States. One of the points to the Beyond the Border process was to harmonize some of these issues with the United States. We've now done that. We're sharing information. There's very little reason why someone who has a 10-year multi-entry visa to the United States shouldn't be able to use a short form to get a short-form visa to come to Canada. Since we're already sharing that information, that's a very easy efficiency to the system, and one that's happening between countries like the U.K. and Ireland.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Another question that I frequently encounter is regarding China. They're a little uneasy or unsure about how the approved destination status works.

To me, if a group comes in on a group tourist visa and the whole group leaves, we could easily facilitate this.

Has this not been the case in your experience with visitors from China?

Mr. David Goldstein: Yes.

We've had a very low number of absconders from those groups. It has been a very successful program. I think it's an area where we should laud the work that the CIC officials in China are doing.

One of the things we've done specifically with the approved destination status tour operators has been to find best practices amongst tour operators who are helping to ensure that the clients they are bringing on their trips are filling out their documentation properly. It's diminishing the number of rejections and shortening the amount of time for approval. There is a way to get the best practices, both with the industry and in market.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: I have a question for Professor Cappe.

With the opening up of the common market with Hungary, Poland and Romania, how did the U.K. handle people coming in to work and illegally staying?

Prof. Mel Cappe: With great difficulty. But they weren't illegally staying; they were legally staying. In fact, right now if you read the U.K. press—and I'm just back from London on Sunday—the dominant issue is about Bulgarian and Romanian visitors who are taking jobs from potential U.K. workers. The fact is they are EU members from member states and therefore they have rights.

•(1155)

Mr. Chungsen Leung: I can see this as a problem as we move toward the CETA agreement and are opening up our borders to people in the east. Will we face the same issue?

Prof. Mel Cappe: Very briefly, I think you have to remember that when we get visitors coming, they bring hands and they bring minds. While it may look like they are supplanting Canadian jobs, they are bringing the possibility of creating Canadian jobs. We shouldn't lose sight of that.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Sitsabaiesan.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to try very quickly to go through each one of you in the order that you spoke.

Dr. Hamdullahpur, we spoke a little with the witness here on Chungsen's questions about the change from the need to apply for a visa each year and the students being able to have that. But speaking with student groups across the country, they've told us that they support the elimination of a single-entry visa for international students in favour of a multiple-entry visa that lasts the duration of their study period, which allows for them to reunite with family for any emergencies or whatever it might be. How do you feel about this proposal?

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: I think it's a good proposal. It should work. It should expedite.... Once a visa is given, the student has satisfied all the requirements, so there should not be any bureaucratic obstacles in front of them.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Thank you.

Professor Cappe, you spoke of false positives and false negatives. Several witnesses have told our committee that contrary to the visitor visa system that we have in Canada, an appeal mechanism exists in our sister countries of the U.K. and Australia. We know that in Canada we have judicial reviews available to us. Do you believe that the visitor visa applicants in Canada should have a right of appeal, as is available in the U.K., instead of the current judicial review and the Federal Court's appeal process?

Prof. Mel Cappe: But as well as the Federal Court process they have the ability to reapply, so they will end.... I understand that the administrative practice is that a different visa officer would review the second application, so that in a sense is already an appeal process.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: You're saying that the second application is an appeal process.

Prof. Mel Cappe: Right, and if you've gotten rejected and the problem is that you haven't satisfied a particular requirement, you can show that well, as a matter of fact, you didn't notice that I did have a permanent residence in...wherever.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Okay. I might come back to pick your brain.

Prof. Mel Cappe: I just don't think you want to—this is odd from a former bureaucrat—put in place a new bureaucratic review process if we already have the possibility of reapplying.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Okay. That's interesting, because we've heard from a lot of witnesses that an appeal mechanism would actually be easier than judicial review and the Federal Court system that—

Prof. Mel Cappe: That's true, but they also can reapply.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Okay.

Mr. Goldstein, you spoke of tourism, clearly. Do you have numbers, or maybe you can provide them to us, on how many potential tourists per year does Canada lose every year as a result of visa processing times?

Mr. David Goldstein: That's a very long answer, and we will provide the committee with some detailed information.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Fantastic. If you can send it to the clerk, that would be great.

Mr. David Goldstein: Can I just comment on the question that you asked of Professor Cappe? I think part of the frustration we hear is that when a visa application is rejected, they don't necessarily understand why.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Yes.

Mr. David Goldstein: If there's a lack of information or there's a lack of compliance, I think that would, again, bring down rejection rates and second rounds would go very quickly.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Basically, if I understand correctly, it's when the visas are being rejected, actually give concrete reasons rather than just the very vague check boxes we have right now.

Mr. David Goldstein: I understand that there are security concerns and sometimes you can't release that information. I'm assuming that the members of the committee have looked at the application form.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Yes, I have.

Mr. David Goldstein: It actually requires less information to get a secret security clearance with the federal government than it does to get a visa application. When you're talking about multiple languages, it can be very difficult. I think a lot of people would just like clarity in the compliance to the process.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Thank you.

In the information you are providing to the clerk, could you also include how much potential revenue is lost as well? I'm assuming you don't have that with you. I'm sure the clerk can follow up with you about what—

•(1200)

Mr. David Goldstein: Some of that is in the report we tabled with the committee, but we will get some specific numbers and table them with the clerk.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Is that your initial comments or the chart?

Mr. David Goldstein: No, there was a white paper we submitted to the clerk—

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Oh, that one, sorry—

Mr. David Goldstein: —but we will also get back to the clerk with some specific numbers.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Fantastic. Thank you.

I'm going to try to throw this in for both of you, if I may. Officials told the committee that CIC extended the maximum validity period for multi-country visas from five to ten years—and I'm out of time.

The Chair: Well, you have 30 seconds. It takes 30 seconds to say your name.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Okay, thank you. If we have more time, we will continue our conversation.

Thank you to all three of you.

The Chair: I've known this person for about a year and I still can't get her name right—

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: So, Dr. Hamdullahpur, don't feel too bad is what he's saying. He tries.

The Chair: Yes. Don't feel too insulted.

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: That's okay, Mr. "Tolson".

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Mr. Leung, go ahead, please.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: No, I'm done.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Weston. Go ahead.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Many people think we're brothers, actually.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would also like to thank our guests.

This is a very important question for us. The riding of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country is the third largest site for tourism industry jobs. There is a very active committee that advises us on tourism questions. I would also like to thank Barrett Fisher, President of Tourism Whistler, and Stuart McLaughlin, President of Grouse Mountain Resort, who advised us in this area.

I have two related questions. There needs to be a balance between safety and openness towards our visitors. Mr. Cappe reminded us of what Mr. Linklater said.

[*English*]

We have to keep this balance between bringing people in and the safety, I think you said, the security, and the health of Canadians.

My question is in two parts.

I'm going to direct the first part to you, Professor Cappe, and then to you, Mr. Goldstein.

[*Translation*]

Some people criticize the limits that we have set and say that our criteria are too strict. In your opinion, what would be a good balance between accepting legitimate visitors and protecting Canadians' safety?

[*English*]

On the second part of the question, dealing with Mexico, I had the honour of being the head of the Canada–Mexico Parliamentary Friendship Group until last year. I went down to Mexico and had the

opportunity to speak to the press about our improved business-visa processing. We all regret the fact that visas are required, but we all know why. Now I understand that visa processing is much improved, there are more visa processing places, and we're giving the Mexican people good reason to come in under the visitor class of visitors.

Professor Cappe, can you go first?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mel Cappe: It is difficult to know if our criteria are too strict. I don't know how to determine what the best balance would be.

[*English*]

How do you determine what the optimum balance is?

How many terrorists should we let in that's going to prove to be optimal? Probably the politics of this suggests zero. How many people who are going to stay on a temporary visa and not go back are we prepared to accept? Inherently, it is a political question, and it's something that you politicians have to come to grips with. It's very tough to find the right answer.

There isn't a technical solution to this question, I'm afraid. You need to come to a judgment about what it is.

My encouragement to you is don't search for zero tolerance. Mistakes are going to be made. There is an optimal quantity of errors.

Mr. John Weston: We have done technical things, like the electronic travel authorization, approved destinations for tourism—things that can improve the technical processing.

Wouldn't you agree that we've made great progress there?

Prof. Mel Cappe: Let me say we've made great progress. I think the five to ten years is a big deal.

In response to Mr. McCallum's question, I understand that in the U.S., for a temporary residence visa, they actually do an interview for 100% of people coming in. We don't. So we have an efficiency there that's probably desirable.

● (1205)

Mr. John Weston: I'm hoping Mr. Goldstein will comment on it, because you also have to get fingerprinted to get that American visa in Mexico.

Mr. David Goldstein: I don't want to come here today and say that there haven't been improvements. In Mexico we have reversed some of the reputational damage that was done to Canada in the process. We're trying to say that a visa as an instrument is a blunt instrument, and I think you have to look at various levels of risk and various levels of accessibility, because not all markets are built the same.

The Mexican visa was imposed at the same time as the Czech visa. We know through the CIDA process—and we're very pleased with the government's progress there—that they came to the conclusion that was a good mechanism to reverse the need for a Czech visa. We think Mexico should be on the list as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Brown.

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question is for David. It's about the trusted traveller program. I thought you could touch upon how that program is working and how it enhances tourism.

Mr. David Goldstein: It's working to its limits, and if there's one key point I want to make today, it is that if we don't reinvest in the system, it's very hard to grow it. Trusted traveller programs have worked to a limited degree, NEXUS being probably the most successful. But there isn't enough promotion behind it, and it's getting difficult to get interviews. It is being consumed by its own success because of the lack of investment.

As mechanisms, they're really important, because, as I said earlier, that's what gets people out of line. Whether it's that or even the innovative stuff that CBSA is doing through ABC kiosks at airports, whatever we do to facilitate the process makes us more competitive.

Mr. Patrick Brown: When you say lack of promotion, what type of promotion would you like to see?

Mr. David Goldstein: I would just like to make it known to the general public that these mechanisms exist. NEXUS is not a household word. I think our community, being the tourism community, and the government and all other stakeholders could be doing a better job. But again, if even a portion of the revenue that's derived from NEXUS applications were reinvested in promotion, you would have more people involved in the program and that would take more people out of line.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Have you seen any improvements to tourism since the December 2012 launch of the online temporary resident visa applications?

Mr. David Goldstein: It's early days, but it's going in the right direction. Our view is that hopefully those processes will eliminate the need for visas in some markets and provide a fast-track system for others. But the full rollout of the electronic travel authorization is not supposed to be until 2015-16, so given the pace of our industry, we are losing market on a daily if not monthly basis.

Mr. Patrick Brown: As you know, our government also implemented a number of measures to fast-track safe refugee claims with the Balanced Refugee Reform Act in 2010 and the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act in 2012. Does the tourism sector that you represent support these changes, and could you elaborate on how this has affected our country's security?

Mr. David Goldstein: In fact we did support those two initiatives at their legislative stages in the hope that if we truncated that system and created more safety and security on that level, that would take the level of risk out of some of these markets. Therefore, we wouldn't necessarily require blunt instruments like visas in Mexico, Brazil, and other places.

Mr. Patrick Brown: On the academic front, obviously we're very proud of the growth in the number of student visas coming to Canada. I think Georgian College, in my own riding, has tripled the number of foreign students who are attending right now. The community certainly embraces that. How long in advance do you think it's fair to ask students to apply in terms of planning, and how does Canada compare to other countries in terms of the period we require?

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: As I mentioned, Canada right now is way behind Australia and the U.K. for visa processing.

You mentioned a number. I think it's very important for us to be able to attract a larger number of international students. The quality is also a very important aspect. With regard to quality, these students have other options. Our biggest competitors right now are the U.S. and Australian universities. These students have multiple offers. Therefore, it's very important for us to expedite their visa processes as fast as possible. If the student receives a U.S. visa before he or she gets a Canadian visa, then it's a decisive factor for them.

For that purpose, we could learn from the airlines. They are very, very safety conscious. They make sure that the safety of their aircraft is of utmost importance, yet they want their airplanes to spend a minimum amount of time on the ground.

This is the approach we should follow. An application lands on a visa officer's desk; we should use a much more simplified process. This is a very no-risk process. Expedite this as fast as possible. In one day, he or she should be able to get a visa. If there are questions, then you should channel them differently, but don't put all applications in the same basket.

This is so important to us, both for the students and also when hiring foreign talent. We are competing with the rest of the world.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Pécelet.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for their extremely interesting presentations.

Professor Cappe, I would like you to speak to us about a certain article that appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* in October 2013. You criticized the government's lack of long-term vision in that article. But, long-term vision is very important for industries, if I have understood correctly.

In the context of short-term immigration, could you tell us more about what you meant in your article and could you make a link with temporary visas?

Mr. Mel Cappe: In the article, I never spoke about immigration. I was actually speaking in general terms.

As far as visas are concerned, I could mention the role that evidence plays in implementing policies or programs. Has the program been a success? We could do an evaluation and determine if it was a success or not, and improve the system based on the suggestions of that evaluation. In this case, I have the evidence that this process helped improve the program.

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Okay, thank you very much.

In a brief tabled with the committee, Martin Collacott, from the Centre for Immigration Policy Reform, suggests allocating more resources to effective border control in order to avoid the arrival en masse of illegal immigrants in our country.

In your opinion, would this type of investment allow the awarding of temporary resident visas to be improved?

Mr. Mel Cappe: Honestly I don't think that it would be useful. I disagree with Mr. Collacott. He spoke about a process of decision review, of checking exits and of an entire system that would make Canada a hostile country for immigrants. I don't agree with that at all.

[English]

Ms. Ève Pécelet: My question will be for both Professor Cappe and Mr. Goldstein.

The committee has been told that Canadian residents have often faced barriers to seeing family from their country of origin, such as clients unable to return to their country of origin due to their refugee status, or clients ineligible—

•(1215)

[Translation]

Mr. David Goldstein: You can ask your questions in French, if you like.

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Anyway, it lets me practice my English. I don't have any objection to speaking French or English.

[English]

To sponsor their family members to come to Canada, as they do not meet the stringent sponsorship requirements.... In your opinion, and in your experience, of course, what are the most frequent problems encountered by Canadian residents in this regard?

Mr. David Goldstein: I will just tell a story. Anecdotes are dangerous, but I will tell a story of a very prominent Canadian business person who is a member of my board of directors, whose mother lived in India. She had a 10-year, multi-entry visa to get into the United States, but had a very difficult time getting even a single-entry visa into Canada. When he approached immigration officials at CIC, he said that when his mother wanted to see her American grandchildren she could go to see them in the United States, but when she wanted to see her Canadian grandchildren, they had to see her in the United States.

So this puts a great deal of pressure on the system.

I would say that the system is getting better, but as I said earlier to your colleague, just understanding the rejection criteria sometimes will help facilitate the process.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lauzon.

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

Mr. Hamdullahpur, first of all, for my understanding, let's say there's a foreign student who applies to your university. Can you tell me what the process is? Does he or she apply to the university and then look for a visa, or does he or she look for a visa and then apply?

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: We put the student's application through our regular admission process, and if the student is qualified and meets all the entry requirements, an official letter is sent to the student that he or she has been admitted to the university, after which the student will then apply for a visa.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: How long does it take for you to accept a student?

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: It depends on the unit they're applying to, but it could vary from one month to two or three months, given the volume of applications. We have application deadlines and they have to meet those deadlines.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I don't know if this is accurate, but it seems to me that I read recently that some of the universities are actually lowering their tuition for foreign students because they're having a hard time filling their vacancies.

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: That is not true in our case at all, and I don't know of any other universities that are doing that.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Okay, and as I said, I don't have that for a fact.

One of the things you said in your opening comments, or maybe in answering a question, is that we need to attract the top students. Of course, we want the brightest and the best in the country. How do you suggest we do that?

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: Our job, of course, is to make sure that we are introducing our universities to the whole world as an excellence centre. It's excellence in whatever we are offering, both in education and research, and in other areas where they can be entrepreneurial, so that they can further think of their Canadian experience as something they can take and continue after their studies.

That is one role; however, there is another piece that is quite important, which is how either provincial or federal governments should present a really attractive picture of Canada to the entire world.

Furthermore, when a student or talent is hired—and last year, 35% of our faculty members came from other countries internationally. When they physically go to a Canadian consulate or visa office, they need to be met with, “We're really delighted that you're considering coming to Canada”, as opposed to, “Let's see what reasons we can find not to let you into Canada.”

I'm not being sarcastic because these are true stories that we hear from our students.

These are the kinds of initiatives that we need to put in place to ensure that we really are attracting the best and the brightest, because when we do that, the dividends are immeasurable.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Yes, and you're in competition, of course, to get the best and the brightest at universities in the States, etc.

Prof. Mel Cappe: Monsieur Lauzon, if I could just add, the president of the University of Toronto today is in China trying to drum up business.

Your point about the best, I think, is really important, and I am entirely in agreement with Professor Hamdullahpur.

In my experience as deputy minister of the environment, when I was in Korea we were trying to press them to buy Canadian product. Their minister of energy had done a post-doctorate at Chalk River on nuclear energy, and we were trying to sell them CANDU reactors. That was enormously valuable.

Another time I was at the UN, and when I was trying to convince Guyana's minister of the environment to support a Canadian proposition, she said, "I studied microbiology at Western University. I understand this."

This is fundamentally important.

• (1220)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: There's no question.

You're in competition with universities in the United States. The student who is overseas and is making the decision, what does he make the decision on? Is it whoever expedites his student visa first?

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: That is important, yes.

If a student has two offers, one from the University of Waterloo and one from Stanford University, and they are of equal value to this student, if he or she gets a visa from the U.S. first, before Canada, I can tell you with 99% certainty that they will choose to go to the United States.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Wallace has the final word.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our guests for being here today.

Professor Cappe, I do agree 100% with what you said. Based on our offices, you can't determine whether a program is working or not.

My very first call as a member of Parliament was a woman with an accent, which I now understand as South African, but I wasn't sure at the time; I thought it was English. Her question was, "You people are evil. You won't let my mother come and visit us. She couldn't get a visitor visa."

Naively I said, "So when did you come to Canada? You came as a landed immigrant?" The individual told me, "No, I came on a visitor visa and stayed." I politely said, "Your mother likely isn't coming then."

I think your point is well taken. Your point on the piece of what the criteria are I think was important. I'll be frank. My position is that the criteria are likely to make sure people who are legitimately coming here will be leaving at the end of their visitor's time.

Based on your experience as a chief bureaucrat here on the Hill... My guess is that the individuals who are working for us in other countries don't get a lot of credit for allowing people to come here legitimately. They will get a lot of crap if they let people in here who end up staying, and so on. There might be a propensity for them to be very tough on allowing people here and following the criteria that's set out. And we do get a copy of what boxes are checked.

Do you have a suggestion from a bureaucratic point of view on how to improve that system, to allow that decision-making to be better?

Prof. Mel Cappe: I think you're right, Mr. Wallace, that there's an asymmetry, that their false positives are not dealt with in the same way as their false negatives. If they keep more people out, the problems are never evident in Canada, whereas if they let the bad guys in, then they feel responsible.

One of the ways of dealing with this is I think to take the risk management approach and build it into the system, and for MPs to be supportive of that, recognizing that every now and then there will be an error. Not asking who to blame for the error but trying to fix the problem instead is therefore a way of improving the system.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Professor, I have a question for you.

I have two daughters. One daughter is actually a foreign student in the United States. She's at Ball State in Indiana.

My question is this. The department, under the previous minister, put out a listing, let's put it that way, of countries where you could not claim refugee status from. You could not do that.

How do you feel about having a list of countries where an expedited student visa is allowed and others where we have to do more due diligence to make sure those are legitimate student visas. Do you have any concerns with having a list of active countries and ones that need more work?

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: First of all, I hope your daughters will come and do their graduate programs at the University of Waterloo.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur: No, I don't have any concerns. I think it's a very practical and smart way to do it. To have a list of countries—we will have very little concern about that. I will support that.

• (1225)

Mr. Mike Wallace: Those are my questions, and it's twenty-five after, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Our time has come to say goodbye.

I thank the three of you. We've had some high-quality testimony.

On behalf of the committee, I thank all three of you.

We will suspend and then go in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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