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**Chair**

**The Honourable Andrew Telegdi**

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## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Friday, April 22, 2005

•(1310)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ)):** We will now call the meeting to order. First of all, I would like to welcome all of those individuals who have taken the time to come here today, on this lovely Friday, to share their opinions and knowledge with us. This sitting will last about an hour and a half. You will have about five to seven minutes to present your briefs. We will then have a question period. You may then provide details or clarification in answering questions from committee members.

I would like to inform you that your testimony will be published on the Internet. As a result, I would ask you to refrain from giving any information that may be confidential or sensitive. In addition, all of your testimony will be used in the drafting of a committee report. This report will be written once our travels are over, probably within the next few weeks. You will, of course, be receiving a copy of this report.

We will first of all hear from Ms. Flora Almeida Marlow.

[English]

**Ms. Flora Almeida Marlow (President, National Association of Canadians of Origins in India):** Since I was here in the morning, I would like to hear this lady first. I would like to speak second, if you don't mind.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** I see no objection to that.

Welcome, Ms. Félicité Tchapda.

**Ms. Félicité Tchapda (President, Cameroun, Social Democratic Front):** Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. If I may, I would first of all like to say that it is both a privilege and a pleasure for me as well as for the Social Democratic Front to be with you here, in Montreal, in this beautiful Sarah Bernhardt room.

The SDF is the main opposition party in Cameroon. It is a member of the Socialist International.

Before I begin, I would like to thank the people of Quebec whose province has been so welcoming to francophone immigrants. I would also like to thank the people of Canada, this country that is showing itself to be the country of the third millennium where everyone feels at home as soon as they set foot here. This is a country whose cultural diversity and uniqueness are the envy of many countries. Consequently, Canada is becoming the country where many citizens in the world dream of going.

For a country that is open to the world like Canada, cultural diversity is enriching, but it must be pointed out that all of these immigrants, who come here from other countries bring with them not only their physical presence and their way of doing things, but also experience and skills acquired in their country of origin. That is the point that we will be trying to make.

Many workers leave their country to immigrate to Canada as skilled workers, but when they get here, they are denied access to the Canadian labour market because of their lack of Canadian experience. How can you require that an individual have three years of experience when the same person says that he or she has been in Canada for five months? This denied access is worse if this individual is a professional, because membership in a professional organization is required in order to practise. And what about the quality of life of the immigrants who, for the most part, were doctors, lawyers, engineers and so forth, and who find themselves on social welfare with an income that doesn't even allow them to rent a decent place? Where, then, is the added value?

In addition, their standard of living does not allow them to provide their children with a better education. They are so exhausted by their work in a manufacturing plant that, once they're home in the evening, they can't sit down with their children to do homework. For some people, since they are no longer able to meet their own needs nor those of their family, they sink into a depression, they become discouraged. We see families break up.

In order to deal with this pretty typical situation experienced by educated immigrants who cannot work because their foreign skills are not recognized, we would suggest the following: training in their field of study enabling them to adapt to the Canadian system, as well as assistance and support, in the form of tax exemptions, to employers who agree to give them this Canadian experience, in summary, positive integration.

Another important aspect that needs to be brought to your attention pertains to the immigrants who have been here for decades and who don't find employment. We cannot say that the people in this category have no Canadian experience. These are men and women who have studied in major Canadian universities, such as the Polytechnical Institute, and who are unable to find a job. A study showed that although Africans were amongst the most educated people in Canada, it was this group more than any other that worked in the manufacturing plants. How do you explain that?

It would be of greater use for the committee to find efficient ways of integrating all of these immigrants into the labour force, immigrants who, for the most part, have university degrees and never stop furthering their education in order to find training that will lead to a job. Today, many are studying in a sector where they hope to find a job. Vocation in choosing a job are words that no longer mean anything for most immigrants. How can you expect a person to spend sleepless nights studying at the Polytechnical Institute only to wind up working in a plant under the supervision of someone who hasn't even finished high school?

A child grows up with a parent who has an MBA from a business school and does not understand why this person stays at home on social welfare. That is the sad reality of thousands of immigrants who, one day, accept to leave everything behind and start over again in Canada but who, upon their arrival, find themselves at a crossroads, no longer knowing whether they should go back to their country of origin or remain here to give their children an opportunity to achieve their broken dreams.

• (1315)

In many cases, they choose the second option, that is to live a miserable existence with all kinds of diplomas hanging on the wall while waiting for the first of the month to come around, in order to receive the welfare cheque, with all of the humiliation that it entails for both the family and, in particular, the individual.

Beyond all of this cynicism of employers with respect to skilled immigrants, hope exists, the hope that you can live in the most beautiful country in the world. You wait, you wait, you do not know what you're waiting for but you wait. You say to yourself that one day the sun will come out and that it will one day be your turn, this turn which will, however, never come if the system remains as it is.

And yet, together, we will build a strong and prosperous Canada. Cooperation means recognizing the credentials of the other person. It means knowing that the person is entitled to make a mistake. Credentials don't eliminate mistakes; they do however, allow mistakes to be corrected. Mistakes are part and parcel of effective action.

Credentials are acquired by doing. If you give a skilled worker an opportunity to work, this individual will be able to demonstrate his skills and, more importantly, acquire the so-called Canadian experience.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you very much.

Ms. Flora.

[English]

**Ms. Flora Almeida Marlow:** Before I tell you my opinions, I would like to give you a general idea of what I went through and my experiences so you know that my opinions are formed from my experiences and my life.

I was born in Bombay, India, and I studied in India—I was doing my chartered accountancy there—and then I came to Canada to study computer science. Because I grew up there, I have a history; I have learned the way that life is in a third world country. In a third world country, people study hard and they attain a qualification.

They want the best in life. Many of them come abroad, and they want to have a job and work and earn a living.

But you have to also realize that besides the honest, straightforward person, we also have corruption in many third world countries. Without seeing the other side of the story, many people from other countries will come with documents, and you will not be able to prove or to ascertain whether they are true or false. For example, when I was studying for my chartered accountancy in India, I could see that many people, if they had the money, could buy exam papers; they could buy certain things. So if you have these degrees or diplomas, how do you prove they are authentic documents? You can't be policing people from all over the world unless you have a system of having them tested here. For example, they will come with two doctorates, with diplomas, and you can't police every country of the world as to how they achieved that document.

I would like to say, let people come to Canada to earn a living and to better their lives. They should be given the opportunity. But giving them carte blanche, so that every document is at the same level, with the same power, as Canadian educational qualifications would devalue our Canadian system. Here, we study English and French, and at every stage we are tested. Well, people will come with no matter what educational qualifications, with degrees and diplomas, and they will have followed no language requirements and will not know the basics, and we will give them two diplomas or two doctorates, and so on. Where do they stand in regard to the Canadian qualifications? We will be judging them on the qualifications they bring along with them, but there's no way of checking whether they are authentic or not.

Thank you.

• (1320)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you very much.

We will now continue with Mr. Gariépy.

**Mr. André Gariépy (Lawyer and Director General, Quebec Interprofessional Council):** Good afternoon.

My name is André Gariépy, and I am the Director General of the Quebec Interprofessional Council. The council represents the 45 professional orders that regulate professional activities in Quebec. The regulation of professional activities is a provincial jurisdiction under the Canadian Constitution. I am here representing the 45 organizations in Quebec that regulate professional activities in the province.

Regulating professional activities is justified by the fact that there are risks associated with practising certain professions: risks to physical integrity, psychological integrity, and heritage integrity. When the risks are such that damage is irreparable when it occurs, the state prefers imposing regulations to prevent these risks by supervising the qualifications of the people exercising these professions in the province.

The much-feared demographic deficit in Canada is a situation facing Quebec as well. For several years, the professional orders, in conjunction with educational institutions, the Quebec Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities, employers, and employees in the province, have joined forces to provide an adequate response to the demographic deficit and its effect on Quebec's labour requirements and economic competitiveness.

This concerted effort is well established. It is bearing fruit. In the brief that we provided, but which we were unfortunately unable to translate in time, the first graph shows the results of this action. The graph clearly shows that for the past four years, the number of applications for admission to the professional orders has increased quite significantly. That proves that changes in the message, which is more positive, and in administrative and other practices by the professional orders and other partners are paying off.

It is very important to understand the specific situation in Quebec, not only because the Constitution gives the provinces jurisdiction over skills recognition, but also because Quebec has negotiated and signed agreements with the federal government for specific responsibilities covering labour market development and immigration, especially as regards the selection of immigrants abroad.

We want to point out today that the federal government's measures and initiatives, although legitimate in spirit, and it is important to be concerned with the demographic deficit and its impact on Canada's economy and competitiveness generally, must be tailored to the specific context of the provinces in general, and to Quebec specifically, as it has additional powers under agreements with the federal government.

In this context, maintaining overlapping initiatives is perhaps less effective. In the final recommendation in our brief, we suggest that the funds the federal government allocates to programs for skills recognition, be it through Immigration Canada, Canada's Innovation Strategy or Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, be transferred to Quebec authorities to respect and make use of the forces that are currently mobilized in the province. That would make it possible to support initiatives that are already in place and that are always insufficient, because action on skills recognition is always required.

You will perhaps see this as a traditional message from Quebec, for those of you who are not from this province. However, remind yourself that this is not about politics; it is about social and economic realities.

• (1325)

The phenomena for which we are seeking solutions in terms of recognizing skills and labour market requirements are regional in nature. In fact, Canada is not a single, uniform economic region from sea to sea, but essentially at least five economic regions, each one with its distinct industrial and social fabric, even though they communicate among each other on certain topics.

These realities must be taken into account, and action must be taken where it counts, with stakeholders who can produce results. In terms of these dynamics, this is currently being done regionally, even more so in Quebec, given the specific reality of the province and its society.

I am available to answer your questions. In light of the comments by the two people who preceded me, I am aware that the regulation of professional activities—often considered an impediment—raises many questions. I am prepared to answer your questions.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you very much, Mr. Gariépy.

Committee members will now ask you a series of questions. I simply want to clarify that you are looking at a group of people who are very interested in the integration of immigrants, as well as in the recognition of foreign credentials. On that point, I believe that all committee members will have very interesting questions.

Mr. Jaffer will ask the first series of questions.

[English]

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC):** Merci, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the guests here this afternoon.

I wanted to start with Flora. You mentioned the concern you had with people who may be purchasing degrees or academic accreditations internationally that may not be legitimate. Just out of curiosity, in your experience, how profound is this? How much of a concern is it for us to know that this is a big problem?

**Ms. Flora Almeida Marlow:** You know, in the third world countries, money plays a very important role in everything, in every aspect of life. In India, for example, the grade 10 exam and the grade 12 exam are very crucial exams, which students in the whole country have to sit for when they're in grade 10 or grade 12. The grade 12 exam will determine whether you're going to medicine or you're going to become...you know, you will be given choices according to your results, so how you get that result is very important.

How do you get it? Sometimes, many a time, people buy the exams before they sit for them, so the previous night, they're sitting and doing the exam. They're doing the exam and practising it two or three times before they sit for the exam. At grade 12, that's a very crucial exam. For example, when I was growing up, there we had the 12th standard math exam out. Everyone was practising the math exam before they went to sit for the exam, and it was the same paper that came.

Money talks in many poor countries. I did the bachelor of commerce degree, and the accounting exam was out for everyone who was going to do the accounting exam. It's a very major exam. Everyone was practising the previous night on the accounting exam, sitting down practising and redoing the same test, and then they went early in the morning and did that same test.

So it depends on who you know and how much money you have, and that determines many things in many poor countries. I'm not just talking about India. Many people wouldn't like me to say certain things. Many people would like me to say, why don't we just get educational qualifications recognized at par? But remember, in every country of the world there is fraud. Money buys many things.

So you have to realize that people will come to Canada with two doctorates, but the poor people who are from Canada, they have studied hard, and they have worked to earn educational qualifications. Then they are judged with somebody who's come with foreign qualifications, and then they have no standard. They can't even compete. They'll be competing with a salaried person.

For example, they'd be evaluated for salary level with somebody who has all these educational qualifications. The Canadian educational qualifications may be just a BA or an MA, but another person coming from another country would have two doctorates. So how do you evaluate? How do you police? How do you check into the interiors of different parts of the world?

Of course I believe everyone should be given the chance to work. Everyone should be able to have a better life, but we also need to have a system of testing. You just can't give carte blanche to anyone who comes with the documents and says, okay, now, I'm a doctor; give me the chance to be a doctor—or for that matter, anyone who says, I'm a nurse, so give me the chance to be a nurse. I believe they have to have the chance to be a nurse, but give them a chance to be working in a hospital, and let them have training in a hospital. Let them get tested in a hospital, and then give them the chance to be a nurse. That's my belief.

Everyone has to get the experience and be tested, and then be given a qualification, but don't give qualifications just like that.

Thank you.

• (1330)

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** I think this is the challenge we have. I think it's what Madame Tchapda was saying with her idea about getting Canadian experience.

I think it's important to be able to look at ways to create incentives for people who are coming here with international credentials, maybe to get Canadian employers to look at the opportunity to hire them to give them Canadian experience.

[Translation]

Mr. Gariépy, based on your experience in your organization, could you tell us if the situation described by Ms. Marlow concerning people arriving with a foreign diploma is a problem you are familiar with and that your organization is constantly battling? In your opinion, what measures could we take to give these people who have genuine diplomas the opportunity to gain experience in the Canadian workforce.

**Mr. André Gariépy:** You are raising a taboo subject. I laud Ms. Marlow for her courage, because the entire Indian community may rise in protest. That gives the impression that all diplomas obtained in India are invalid. The diploma itself is valid, and issued by a serious university that exists and offers the courses, but the person who issued the diploma, administratively, was bought. Does

that mean that all immigrants from India must be put on a list of cases to be reviewed just to be safe? It is a taboo subject.

However, for organizations that regulate professional activities, it is true that the validity of information is a problem. You can contact your counterparts at the Quebec Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities, who have developed expertise in detecting fraudulent documents. However, the kind of fraud Ms. Flora was talking about is not in the document, but in the way the document was obtained. That situation is troublesome, since we have no choice but to recognize that it is an authentic document. We can ask the university that issued the diploma if the person actually studied there and actually obtained the diploma; the university will say yes, because the person in charge of confirming the information was paid. What can we do? We certainly will not verify everything. It is a problem.

That makes us wonder how we can verify people's qualifications. Often, in recognizing skills, we must look at the person in front of us instead of the papers he holds. I am sorry, but that principle cannot apply in all situations. In Quebec, in professions that can be the source of considerable injury to the population, like medicine, people must prove that they have been trained to practise the profession. If there is any doubt, these people must systematically write exams to validate their knowledge. However, an exam will never replace training. A one-day or two-day exam will never replace four, five, six or ten years of studies and all of the exams that the person sat over the course of those studies. An exam complements valid verified information that confirms the person has been trained to practise a profession. The validity of diplomas is a problem.

The 45 professional orders in Quebec have reached an agreement with the Quebec Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities on the exchange of information on controversial cases where the validity of the diplomas are in doubt, specifically to detect processes in certain universities and certain types of immigration, because they exist. This is a very delicate issue and highly taboo, but we have no other choice but to verify those things. Sometimes, we end up with some unfortunate findings.

I think that Ms. Flora was very courageous in making those remarks.

• (1335)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you.

To make the committee's work easier, and because we have a little time, please signal when you wish to take the floor. That will enable us to share the time fairly.

Mr. Clavet.

**Mr. Roger Clavet (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Gariépy and the two other witnesses.

Mr. Gariépy, in its brief, the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec recommends—and this is something people from the Bloc will certainly not oppose—that Quebec's share of amounts allocated to federal skills recognition programs be transferred to the Quebec government. This is because, as you say, that is what the Constitution provides for, and they have to be recognize the Quebec government.

By contrast, I put myself in f an immigrant's shoes, and I feel very happy. People like Ms. Tchapda and Ms. Marlow tell us that one day things will be very good for qualified immigrants. Then, I look at the list of the 45 professional orders you represent. Throughout these hearings, I have been having the same dialogue—people tell us about needing to keep their integrity—their physical, psychological and cultural integrity. It's like an exclusive domain. It's as if we don't want engineers from Lebanon or elsewhere. We often hear that.

With all due respect, I would like you to give those people an answer, not me. We agree that some diplomas are not genuine. However, are those isolated cases that professional associations simply used to prevent an engineer, a pharmacist or a doctor who is not White and born in Montreal or Toronto from working here?

I would like you to persuade me, and persuade the others. We are not imputing any motives.

Has any progress been made? Are we on the right track?

**Mr. André Gariépy:** Mr. Clavet, thank you for your franc question, which touches on all the prejudices affecting professional regulatory organizations. I'm not surprised, because this is the kind of thing we face every day. Professional orders have a very thankless role.

When we talk about physical integrity, we mean someone who has the physical ability to put us to sleep on an operating table, pick up a scalpel, and confidently cut open the human body in order to heal or solve health problems.

When we talk about psychological integrity, we mean a professional, someone to whom we would, within the intimacy of a psycho therapeutic relationship, say, entrust information about ourselves, a vision of ourselves, our hidden thoughts. We would give that person the power to act upon the structure of our personality, on the way we operate within society and interact with others and with those close to us. We would allow that professional to do this.

When it comes to heritage integrity, we would entrust our financial and tax-related personal affairs to a lawyer or an accountant, since as ordinary citizens we don't have the right kind of expertise.

Let's say you needed an operation tomorrow. You haven't had time to study medicine for five years, so you don't know whether the operation suggested to you is the right one, and you don't know whether it will be carried out by someone who is properly trained to perform it with the least possible risk. That is what we call the risk to physical, psychological and heritage integrity.

In Quebec, like in other states of the world, when the risks are too high the government may intervene at the start of the process to regulate the skills of people who will practice those professions. Since ordinary citizens do not know enough about the practices of

those professions, the government is itself not in a position to set out standards of competence for the professions. It needs the expertise of professionals in those professions. It asks doctors to establish competence standards for the practice of medicine, and asks psychologists to establish them for psychology. Similarly, it asks accountants to establish standards for accounting, so that accounting practices are properly carried out and so there is no wrongdoing by any of the parties involved. There have been problems of that nature in the United States.

There's a real need to protect the public. But here is the question you are asking: do professional regulatory associations, who have a duty to protect the public against very real risks, are carrying out that duty in a transparent and effective manner?

Thirty years ago, we would not have deserved the prejudices you enumerated, and which I certainly do not believe are your personal prejudices. However, in 1974, there was a revolution in how Quebec regulated the professions. The National Assembly adopted the Professional Code, which imposed the transparency and accountability framework on professional regulation organizations by establishing the Office des professions du Québec, which monitors how professional orders perform their duty. As a result, professional orders who use the knowledge of experts in a given profession to establish standards do not operate arbitrarily, in an isolated fashion. They are accountable to the Office des professions du Québec. Moreover, all the standards they establish must be approved by the Government of Quebec. These decisions are no longer arbitrary; they are no longer made behind closed doors.

There is one thing I should tell you, Mr. Clavet. During a series of Canada-wide conferences organized by the federal government—in fact, specifically by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Human Resources Development Canada—when I presented the transparency and accountability framework used by Quebec's professional orders, immigrant support groups in other Canadian provinces requested that the Quebec framework be applied in their provinces. Several years ago, through its Minister of Labour and Immigration, the Government of Manitoba invited me to give a lecture to all stakeholders and describe how we operate. After the lecture, the Minister said that she would never have thought that Quebec would set the example.

Mr. Clavet, things have changed a great deal since the time when those prejudices you expressed were deserved. In fact, the results of measures we have taken to review skills recognition practices are extremely conclusive.

● (1340)

Now...

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Madam Chair, might we see what Ms. Tchapda thinks about that? We never have enough time. I would have liked to hear her views out of curiosity. She has not said very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Mr. Clavet, I'll be happy to throw the lifebuoy when my turn comes.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** In that case, that's fine.

Forgive me, Mr. Gariépy. I just wanted every participant to have a fair chance. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Very well. Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would also like to thank Mr. Gariépy, Ms. Tchapda and Ms. Marlow for their testimony.

Unfortunately, I speak very little French. I will have to continue in English.

• (1345)

[English]

I wanted to say how good it is to have another democratic socialist at the table this afternoon. I'm glad you're here, Ms. Tchapda. It's sometimes lonely around this table.

I wanted to ask about the matter of Canadian experience. We've heard in our hearings across the country that this sometimes operates as an excuse for discrimination, for racism. When witnesses from the city of Toronto appeared before us, their diversity committee pointed out that for this reason they no longer allow the term "Canadian experience" to be used in their hiring process. Instead, they have developed a list of specific skills and job requirements that people need to meet. They believe this has been a helpful thing in ensuring that newcomers to Canada have a better chance at jobs with the city of Toronto.

Have you seen the requirement of Canadian experience used to discriminate against people seeking work here in Canada?

[Translation]

**Ms. Félicité Tchapda:** My English is not perfect, Mr. Siksay. I would like someone to repeat the question in French so that I can make sure I answer correctly.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** There is the interpretation device.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Gariépy:** In fact, I think he would like you to describe in more detail how your experience in Canada has been.

**Ms. Félicité Tchapda:** I will be happy to answer your question.

Personally, I managed. As I said, we no longer study out of a sense of vocation. We go into a field in which we hope to find a job.

At present, everyone in my community knows that becoming a nurse gets you a job. However, Mr. Gariépy is casting doubt on the professional qualifications of immigrants who come here with degrees obtained outside Canada. I know many citizens of Cameroon who completed their studies at the École Polytechnique or HEC in Montreal, and who work in factories.

Perhaps we should be linking immigrants' lack of integration to their colour, rather than to their lack of skills or qualifications. Eighty people complete their education at Montreal's HEC or École Polytechnique, and seventy of them find a job. Is it a coincidence that those seventy are all White, and the ten who never find jobs are coloured immigrants?

I don't think that skills are at issue. I also know Cameroonians who completed their studies at the École Polytechnique but without

going through a period of training. Why not? Because companies were not opened to it. I think this is not a question of skills or qualifications. People simply have to open the door and give others a chance.

It is really not a question of skills.

Thank you.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Do you know of programs in Quebec that would help employers deal with issues of racism in their workplace?

[Translation]

**Ms. Félicité Tchapda:** Perhaps I'm not in the right position to answer that question. I do not wish to generalize. I know there are positive aspects in Quebec, for example their openness to immigrants. By contrast, there is the information and resources issue. Immigrants don't have good resources. They seek information, but don't necessarily know where to go to get good advice.

I think it is more a question of resources rather than integration.

• (1350)

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Maybe I could ask that same question to Monsieur Gariépy.

In your organization, has there been a discussion about the question of racism? Are there resources for professional organizations to address that issue here in Quebec?

**Mr. André Gariépy:** Yes. I will answer it in English, just to practise my accent a little bit.

What Mrs. Tchapda is saying is very critical. "Professional orders", as we call them in Quebec—regulatory bodies—do not control access to employment; employers are responsible for that. They are only responsible for a competency assessment. Whatever the origin of the people, it is the same thing, at least in Quebec. It is adopted by the government, and it has the same rules, the same requirements, whether you come from a Quebec university or a university outside Quebec.

So the requirements are the same, but whenever you get your permit from a regulatory body you have to find a job, and yes, there is some problem regarding that. I cannot answer for the Quebec Ministry of Immigration, but I know pretty well, because I work with them, that they have a program to encourage employers to have employees from other communities—immigrants—so that they will get to know these people, their competency, and the fact that they have the requirements to work in their businesses. We have that kind of program.

Sure, we need more money to do it, and sure, the Province of Quebec doesn't have all the money it wishes to have to do that job, but at least we have some programs.

As for the information resources to support the immigrants through the integration process, the Ministry of Immigration in Quebec created for the regulated professions an information service dedicated to those professions and trades regulated in Quebec, so that the immigrant will know the requirements and how to...because sometimes it is a question of understanding how to fulfill the requirements. That information service, which was established in accordance with our action as the interprofessional council representing the 45 professional boards, was put in place in 2002, and it has been working very well.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Do I have more time, Madam Chair?

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** You have three seconds left.

Mr. Telegdi.

[English]

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I listened with interest to the commentary. First, Bill, let me say I try to do my best to make sure you don't feel too alone in a lot of committees. One of the wonderful things about this committee is that we seem to have a pretty good consensus on most issues, and recognition of international credentials is one of them.

Madame Tchapda, I know from personal experience, through my father, what a terrible thing it is to have a brain waste. We really are talking about people not being able to utilize their learning and credentials. We do a lot of talking about the brain drain, but the brain waste is much bigger, and we really have to make sure we address it, because we in Canada lose out in many ways financially—it has a bad impact on the economy—but more importantly in the personal sense.

Take the profession of physicians. We have a doctor shortage, and yet we have artificial barriers not allowing internationally trained physicians who meet Canadian standards to be able to practise. It's a tragedy for them and it's a tragedy for the people who do not have family doctors.

Madame Marlow, I agree with you that we need to make sure there's integrity in the credentials we accept. And there is a problem, because if you have an engineer—someone who has an engineering degree—you want to make sure the bridge doesn't fall down or the house doesn't collapse. I'm aware that in India there were huge questions, particularly after the earthquake that happened, where many people lost their lives. But I think we have a pretty good handle on this among the professional associations when they check out credentials. It's not difficult to check out the skills people have; we can assess that pretty well. And of course we want to do that, because we don't want to throw international credentials into disrepute; that's very important.

One of the questions I have for all of you is this. We established a new policy for the economic class. The breakdown we have is 60% economic class, 40% family reunification and refugees. My question is, should we be shifting those numbers, and should we be also including trades? It's hard for tradespeople to get in under the economic class now, and we have a real shortage of them. Should we be including trades within the economic class?

I mention that because I don't think this was really thought through when the point system was changed a number of years back. I know some of the thinking behind it was to get educated people who can shift with the changes in the economy. But the reality is that there are trades for which we have a desperate need, and we have the experience of many credentials not getting the kind of recognition they should.

I wonder if you could respond to my question, all three in turn.

Madame Tchapda, I'll start with you.

● (1355)

[Translation]

**Ms. Félicité Tchapda:** [Inaudible]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Would someone else like to answer? Flora?

[English]

**Ms. Flora Almeida Marlow:** It is a very good question that you have asked.

As for tradespeople, Canada is lacking many tradespeople—for example, masons to build our buildings, and plumbers—and people who would not normally go for these sorts of positions. They need these trades in Canada, because getting only educated people is not good enough; we have to be all-round. We have to get people to do different sorts of jobs.

As for changing the percentage, according to me, when you're getting a new immigrant... If I were given a chance to choose, I would always go for a person who's young and who's single, because they come without carrying big baggage along with them. They come willing to learn and willing to share their experience. The older the person is... What happens is they're already set in their patterns and are not willing to integrate as well. The youth, tradespeople, educated people will be very important to Canada.

Thank you.

**Mr. André Gariépy:** The key is answering the need. My sense of the federal and Quebec immigration policies is that they are both driven by economics, so answering the need means looking at what we need as a workforce.

I would remind you that the workforce is a regional phenomenon. There are specific characteristics within regional economies in Canada. In Quebec, we did an analysis with the employment ministry, and we forecast that in the next five or six years we will need 600,000 people to fill the needs of the workforce. Amongst those, two-thirds will need to have technical or trade-level training.

The key for immigration is to select the people we need. If we keep having these points that say, for example, if you have a doctorate degree in art history you break the ceiling and you move in front of someone else who has only technical training, well, we're missing something. I know for sure, because I'm working with them, that the Quebec immigration ministry is reviewing this.

So constantly adapting this checklist to give out points to candidates for immigration and linking it with the real needs of the Quebec economy is key. When we know what we need, we can select according to that.

• (1400)

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** We really made a major decision when we got away from that.

In terms of the European model, I have a lot of friends who have trades from Europe. What amazes me is that they are more into the arts than I am. They're into opera and ballet. It's even in the stuff they read; they're into philosophers. So the whole model in Europe is that to be a tradesperson is to be a very well-rounded person.

You're very much an expert on this area, and I agree with you, because just last week I found out about another one that I hadn't really thought about until I talked to my neighbour. There is a huge shortage of elevator mechanics in this country, a huge shortage, and we as a nation have not done as good a job as we could have to follow the European model, where trades are offered in school. Somehow the perception of trades is that you were too dumb to go to university, when the reality is that many of the tradespeople make twice as much money and have greater job satisfaction than lots of university graduates.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Is there anything you would like to add?

**Ms. Félicité Tchapda:** I really believe that the key to immigration success lies in being honest with immigrants as soon as they leave their country. They have to realize that Canada is not the heaven on earth they may believe it to be and that there will be challenges. Many immigrants sell everything, including their house, and they quit their job. They believe that when they immigrate to Canada, they will regain everything they had in their homeland as soon as they arrive. But it does not take them long to realize that this is impossible.

Employers have to give immigrants a chance. Prejudices act as a screen for our fears. You can't decide someone is incompetent without first giving this person a chance to prove themselves. Some employers tell immigrants that since they have no Canadian job experience, they have none at all. However, an immigrant's way of doing things may be an asset for a company. Regardless of how you get there, the most important thing is to achieve the same result. But what is most important is for employers to be truly open minded.

Even immigrants who are already here and who get their bachelor's degree from Polytechnique can't get an internship because every door is closed to them. They know that jobs are available and that they meet the employment criteria. Six months later, they'll see the same position being offered. They have sent their résumé but have received no answer. Employers really have to give a chance to

immigrants, put aside their prejudices and base their decisions more on action than perception.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you very much.

I will ask you a question which was put to me by a member of the public. I will try to summarize it. I was involved as an observer and speaker in several communities during the action week against racism. I can tell you that some of the testimony we heard was searing and hurtful as it related to access to the labour market and employment opportunities. Let me explain.

People coming from other countries, who have studied abroad, aspire to make a positive contribution to Quebec society, and would therefore like to work in the field they studied for so many years. These people would also like to take advantage of the experiences they have had abroad. I don't know if this necessarily affects professional orders, but I would like to make you aware of this matter. It hurts me every time I hear about it.

I myself am a product of immigration. My mother is Chinese. However, I do not look like a Chinese person and never had any problem getting a job. Of course, some people are intrigued when they read my name; they wonder about my background. However, that did not prevent me from realizing there were obstacles, as you say, to employment.

I also helped to setting up employment job search organizations and Carrefours jeunesse-emploi of Québec, which help ease people onto the job market. Sometimes people need a period of adaptation. But the fact remains that the testimony I heard last week was very hurtful because these problems are often hidden and are not necessarily out in the open.

I would like to hear what you think about this subject. I would like to know whether awareness programs have been put in place for the professional orders, and whether any progress has been made.

I would like to hear from Ms. Marleau and Ms. Tchapda. Based on what I understood, you studied abroad. Are you currently working in the field for which you studied?

• (1405)

[*English*]

**Ms. Flora Almeida Marlow:** I studied accounting and computer science. I'm not doing work in these regards, but the thing is, when immigrants come to this country, they want a chance to work somewhere. For example, if an immigrant has an accounting background, and even if they're at the top, a bank should at least be open to their having an entry-level position, so they see them or are at least exposed to them, and they can then climb up the ladder as fast as they can. But the thing is, without even giving them the chance to enter a bank, for that matter, you can't prove your excellence in accounting. So every person should be given a chance, then be tested and evaluated, and move up.

Similarly, with doctors, they are coming into the country with doctors' degrees and are then working in restaurants or as taxi drivers, meaning that they're losing out. But the other thing is, give them a chance to enter a hospital; give them a chance to do certain things that a doctor wouldn't normally do, so that they can at least be around and learn on the job. Do something, learn it, get tested, and move up—but getting the entry position is the most important thing.

That's why I say don't take all the qualifications as are, but give them the chance to enter and let them prove themselves, and then they can move up like everyone else.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**Ms. Félicité Tchabda:** As far as I am concerned, I can say that I was lucky to arrive here at a slightly younger age than my fellow countrymen. I quickly found out how things worked, because I was told of the situation. I was told not to study what I love, but rather to study in a field which would make it easier for me to find a job. So I ended up studying nursing and I got my bachelor degree. The only reason I studied nursing is because I knew I had to find work.

When I entered the labour market, I realized that nursing was not really what I wanted to do. Yes, I have a job. But I am now doing a bachelor degree in communications and public relations because that is what I want to do.

I studied nursing, but if I had to work as a nurse my entire life just because I need to work, I would be unhappy.

Some of my fellow countrymen have bachelor degrees in administration, or MBAs, or they are engineers, but they are all doing factory work at \$7 an hour. Their supervisor did not even finish high school and is supervising people who have doctorates.

**Mr. André Gariépy:** Each case is a drama and we have to prevent them from happening. It is true that, in the course of the selection and integration process, an immigrant, from the very beginning, from the first contact with immigration officers abroad—whether they represent Quebec or Canada—and until the first day on the job, meets with all kinds of workers and there is always the possibility that the immigrant gets lost in the system. Of the 40,000 people selected each year for immigration to Quebec, between 2,500 and 3,000 will end up working in a regulated profession in Quebec. So they do not represent the majority.

You have to understand—and my colleagues who are here understand this—that a person who emigrates is uprooted. If you uproot a tree and plant it elsewhere, there is a shock. You have to nurture the tree to ensure that the roots take hold in the new soil. The same principle applies to a human being who leaves a country behind, a country with its own structured society and culture which underpins the political, economic and social structure of the country. When this person arrives in a new country, this person is in a situation of anomie, which is how a sociologist would put it. Because of the cultural gap, there is a culture shock. On either side of the gap is a shore. The distance separating an immigrant from the new country is determined by the new country's culture, but also by the fact that the immigrant comes from a completely different kind of place. Both parties are responsible for building a bridge to link both shores. The immigrant must understand that the country is different,

that it will not be easy, but the immigrant must also do his or her part to move forward. As for us, we have to understand that this difference exists.

Ms. Faille asked us what the professional orders are doing in particular to show their awareness of this culture gap. I would answer that since it is sometimes difficult to grasp this culture gap, we decided to provide training in intercultural relations to the admission's administrators of the professional orders in the last few years. The intercultural-relations training does not last a few hours; we do not teach people that being Japanese means eating sushi. Of course, that is a gross misrepresentation.

The training program we created, in co-operation with a group of experts in the field, is very professional and is given over two days. We analyze the various stages leading to admission to a professional order. We looked at what the consequences would be if an immigrant misunderstood what was involved at each stage and with every contact in the process, as well as what the consequences would be if the admission's officer for a professional order in Quebec misunderstood the immigrant. We realized that there is a communications gap and, as a result, we had to make sure that our judgment would not be affected by this gap or by a problem of perception.

For instance, when an immigrant is asked by a professional order to talk about their knowledge and acquired skills, to talk a bit about themselves, to talk about what they have already done, about their work experience, the fact is that in some cultures, you just do not talk about yourself. In fact, talking about yourself could be perceived as being pretentious or something like that. So what is the perception of the officer from the professional order of an immigrant who comes from a culture where talking about oneself is just not done? The perception is that the immigrant is evasive, that the person perhaps has not accomplished the things he or she has claimed to have done, and as a result, this person is not really perceived as being competent, when in fact he or she may well be. The two-day training sessions, which are very specialized and provide a wealth of information on intercultural relations, have helped to close the gap of communication and understanding between immigrants and the institutions created by the government, namely the professional orders.

The awareness exists. We will continue with this training, but one thing is clear: immigrants have to prepare themselves to the best of their abilities before arriving in Quebec or Canada. That is the secret. I often meet with immigrants and immigrants' support organizations, and they tell me that they did not know. It happens at the time of selection. Immigration officers say they have to fill their 100,000 or 200,000-immigrant quota. They will admit some people and tell them that everything is fine, that they will find a job, thank you very much and have a good day.

● (1410)

I am sorry, that is a misrepresentation. An immigrant has to receive all the necessary information to decide whether it is realistic to settle in Canada or in Quebec and whether the move would be successful for the immigrant and for us as well.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Siksay, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Monsieur Gariépy, you mentioned that in 1974 there was a revolution in how professions were regulated in Quebec. I have asked other professional associations about this, and some people were a little shaky on the historical details of the regulation and licensing process.

I am wondering if you know why that change came about in 1974. Was there was a particular situation that the government or the professional associations were responding to? Had there had been any failures in the previous system that caused the change in the licensing and regulation of professions?

When we were in Vancouver we heard from an organization of Filipino nurses. They are employed mostly as child care workers through the live-in caregiver program. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, when Canada was facing an extreme shortage of nurses, nurses from the Philippines came to Canada and went to work immediately in the medical system, without any reassessment of their credentials or long waits for licensing. They were immediately put to work because there was an urgent need for nurses in the system.

You mentioned the labour market needs of Quebec, and you mentioned that you were working to meet them. Monsieur Clavet has told us that he lives in Quebec, has no family doctor, and has little hope of acquiring one. It strikes me that there is an urgent need in Quebec and other provinces for family doctors. Yet we keep hearing about doctors driving taxis.

When do we reach the breaking point? When do we realize that our system is too cumbersome and people are going without services that could be met by people already here?

• (1415)

**Mr. André Gariépy:** Mr. Siksay, concerning the historical data, my hobby is to be a non-professional historian. So whenever I get into something, I go into the history file.

We celebrated the 30th anniversary of the professional code last November. On our website, [www.professions-quebec.org](http://www.professions-quebec.org), we have the report of the Royal Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada and other matters, called the Castonguay-Nepveu commission. You will see a report concerning the professions.

What was achieved in 1974 is answering the kind of label that Mr. Clavet raised a bit earlier. It was to answer the problem of transparency of the regulatory bodies. The fact is that the government didn't control the requirements and it was simply left to the regulatory bodies to set the requirement, and it was automatic that it became law. It shouldn't be like that. So the government said, enough is enough; we need to harmonize all this. At that time, we had 30 different laws. So we need to harmonize the processes and we need also to put more equilibrium in the fact that, yes, we need your expertise, we rely on your expertise to propose a requirement and professional standard, but as the legitimate deciding body—meaning the National Assembly and the government—for the entire population, we will be the ones giving the sanction to that, and if we are not in agreement with the standard you propose, we have the power to change it. And that's a cultural shift—the autonomy that you give to regulatory bodies.

So regulatory bodies in Quebec are still autonomous, but there's an equilibrium, with the office of the profession and the government saying, you might propose things to us, but we have the final say in it. So it is to answer the problem of transparency and accountability.

So as for Denise in the health care area, again, history tells us a lot of things. First, a few years ago the Government of Quebec changed a provision in its immigrant selection bylaws, saying that you are not allowed to immigrate to Quebec if you want to practise these professions. It was a very old bylaw that said that if you are part of these professions, if you are a doctor and you want to immigrate to Quebec, you cannot. This was changed a few years ago. So it was the bylaw of the government that prevented some people from coming to Quebec.

As for facing shortages, if ever someone still wants to say that in Quebec regulatory bodies are protecting economic territory...in a situation of shortages you have enough room for everybody. Do you know something? If you are in a situation of shortages, you don't give services to people. It's worse than giving bad services; there are no services.

This is why a lot of those regulatory bodies that are facing shortages even initiate recruitment trips abroad to recruit people. We are talking about radiologist technicians—you can translate that better than me, *technologue en radiologie*—even nurses. You know, the nurses were the first to say to the government, get rid of our mention in your list of inadmissible professions for immigration to Quebec. We have a shortage. Come on, open up. You are the obstacle. So the government changed all that a few years ago.

This is part of the mobilization that you can see in Quebec. Everybody is doing his part. The government, through changing bylaws, administrative measures, more focused selection, especially if we are in need of these people...and the regulatory bodies are on board in that mobilization, participating in and initiating recruitment strategies abroad.

So you will find in the brief that it has taken a long time to come together, because everybody is autonomous in his way—the education system, the professional system, the health care system—but finally during the past few years we have managed to agree on the challenge and we have agreed to work together. We have the results now and we want to continue to pursue that direction.

• (1420)

This is why, if ever the federal government has some money... because I saw that in the recognition program you have \$68 million for the next six years. Well, you cannot superimpose your program objectives on the ones already in place in Quebec, given the big mobilization that we have had, so come on, give us the money and we'll do the job and everybody will be happy—even you.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** I would like to thank everyone who appeared before the committee. You provided us with a wealth of information, as I stated in my introduction. Thank you very much, Mr. Gariépy. I sometimes have the impression of being the only one present to explain what distinguishes Quebec.

There may be one issue which you did not address, but which you mentioned implicitly when you spoke about mobilization and our networking philosophy. I personally helped build these networks, and it is true that we do things differently. As Mr. Clavet said earlier, count on us to find the money.

[English]

**Mr. André Gariépy:** As for the political part, I am more action oriented than result oriented, in a way. But I respect your role in this, because it is hard sometimes to convince people in Ottawa to say, yes, it might be different and regional, and we might just help people do the job locally, because this is where it counts, and this is where we can get better results.

**Ms. Flora Almeida Marlow:** I have just one point to mention.

We are guests on your team. We're doing it freely and without charge, and we need some respect too. We should not be criticized for our opinions, because these are our honest opinions about our experiences with life. So please, when you're using our information, let us know how it's going to be used, because we don't want a backlash.

I'm representing a community that may not want to think like we do. I want to change people's thinking. So it should not have a negative effect. We're giving our honest opinions from experience and knowledge, and there should not be a backlash.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you.

The testimony we have heard and the briefs which have been tabled will be reflected in our report. I do not think we are going to necessarily name every witness by name. We are aware of your situation and your reservation.

All this good work will culminate in the drafting of several reports which I believe will be tabled fairly quickly.

Thank you all. We will hear from the next group of witnesses in a few moments.

• (1425) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1438)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you very much to all of you. I am a member from the Montreal area, more specifically from the other side of the island of Montreal, in a suburb, namely Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

It is my pleasure to welcome you here, in the Montreal region. Despite the fact that I am often here—I recognize several faces—I am pleased to see you again to speak about an issue related to family reunification. As members of this committee, we are quite honoured

to welcome you and we appreciate what you have to tell us in your briefs.

Surely you realize that your contribution is exceptional and public. If there are subjects which are even more delicate, I would appreciate that you raise them. It is important. I believe that some witnesses also addressed that issue.

All of your briefs will help us draft several reports, including one on citizenship, another on family reunification, and the third one on international jurisdictions. We therefore greatly appreciate the fact that you have taken the time to appear before the committee.

Before you sit the members of a committee who are very sensitive to issues facing immigrants. We will try to bring about the necessary legislative changes to the best of our abilities.

Since there are quite a few of you, I will ask you to limit your presentations to about five minutes so that committee members have time to ask questions. As well, if you wish to respond to questions, I would like you to signal your intention to me because our time is limited. So, without further delay, let's move down the list.

We will begin with the Quebec Immigration Lawyers' Association.

**Mr. Patrick Caron (CA member, Quebec Immigration Lawyers Association):** Good afternoon, Madam Chair, Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen, members of the committee.

It is with great pleasure that I will present to you, on behalf of the Quebec Immigration Lawyers Association, certain aspects of our position on family reunification.

The many points we deal with in our brief are, in our opinion, very important. Nevertheless, since we only have five minutes to present them to you, we will stick to our conclusions and to the problems we pinpointed. We also expect to receive a few questions on some of the more detailed aspects.

The issues we will deal with this afternoon all fall under the objective contained in section 3 of the act. This section sets out the objectives of the act, including the objective to see that families are reunited in Canada. I would like to insist on the term “to see” which, though it may seem very paternalistic, is also very important.

Our presentation will therefore deal with four issues. The first one concerns the delays with regard to processing family reunification cases. We will then talk about the exclusion in the family category by means of section 117(9d) of the immigration and refugee protection regulations. The paragraph refers to an exclusion in the family category. In our opinion, this is a very serious measure. Finally, we will address the desirable notion of widening the scope of the family category. We will conclude with the recommendation to make the definition of marital partner more specific, because the current definition makes it difficult to apply in practice.

To begin, as far as delays are concerned, the AQAADI maintains that several types of family reunification applications may be presented. This includes certain applications made by people who have obtained refugee status in Canada. These people presumably are encountering huge problems in their country and may have abandoned loved ones, be they spouses or children.

If you go on Citizenship and Immigration Canada's website, you will see that processing delays vary between 12 and 25 months in the vast majority of cases. A person could presume that after 25 months, most cases will have been processed. The AQAADI believes that if people left their country and were awarded refugee status, the processing delay for family reunification applications is totally excessive. With all due respect, we suggest that this issue be given particular attention.

Now, if you look at the time it takes for an application to bring a spouse over to be processed, you'll find out, still on the website, that the processing time is long as well, ranging from 11 to 17 months. There is a rule concerning applications originating from outside Canada, but the fact remains that we are dealing with a major disruption in the family unit. We believe that more resources should be made available for this category.

We could also address the sponsoring of children. The delays vary between 18 to 26 months. Again, these delays are excessive, since children are very vulnerable people within the family unit. Of course, our entire legislation, including the Civil Code and the Supreme Court, in its ruling on the Baker case, for instance, provide sensible measures, always in the best interest of the child.

Finally, I have of course to address the processing delays for children who want to sponsor their parents from abroad. There are significant delays. In that regard, the AQAADI recommends that priority treatment not be strictly given anymore to spouses being sponsored, but that it should apply to the entire family category. The case of people being physically threatened—for instance in the case of refugee reunification—is particularly compelling. This is a point we insist on.

The second issue I will deal with, which is without a doubt of great importance for us, relates to the application of a very specific subsection of the regulations. This subsection concerns persons who are not considered as being family members based on their relationship with the sponsor, for instance such as when the sponsor has become a permanent resident following an application, and that the other person, in fact a family member, did not undergo a security check at the time the application was made.

• (1440)

These are undeclared cases. They are very delicate matters, since it is not uncommon for people acting in good faith to not declare a member of their family. Of course, these are examples. Examples that are somewhat more elaborate also exist. For instance, what is to be done with a child who is born after the visas have been issued, but shortly before arriving?

The application of this provision is problematic. However, l'AQAADI wishes to draw your attention first and foremost to cases where action is in good faith. The association has a very important recommendation, that a safeguard clause be added to this subclause, that leaves no discretion to the visas officer abroad when he is confronted with the situation.

I refer you to page 8 of our brief. The wording could be evaluated in keeping with the style of the day, but essentially, this would mean adding the following wording to section 117(9)(d) of the

**Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations:** for the primary purpose of acquiring a status or a privilege under the act.

If the idea were to avoid control, because someone had something to hide, then we all agree: there is consensus to exclude that person from the family member category. However, in situations where the omission was truly accidental and unfortunate, it appears to us that the objective of family reunification is completely disregarded by the wording of the section that we were praising today, if you will pardon the expression. So a safeguard clause would be most necessary and would make it possible to comply with legislative objectives. There will be no favouritism. However, there will be a bit of humanity in our rules.

Thirdly, l'AQAADI feels that it would be a good idea, even desirable, to broaden the notion of family class. Why has l'AQAADI taken this position?

In preparing our brief, we noted that certain conditions for being part of this category are so demanding that it is as if the text of the act were designed to apply to one case at the very most. We are referring namely to section 117(1)(f) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations, where it says that a brother, a sister or a member of the family as a respondent may sponsor a brother or a sister in cases where the person abroad is—and note the cumulative conditions—less than 18 years of age, has lost his mother and father and, finally, is neither married nor involved in a common-law relationship.

We note that the conditions are extremely restrictive. Therefore, l'AQAADI recommends broadening this category to enable brothers and sisters to act as respondents for their close family members and sponsor their brothers and sisters abroad. The opportunity for sponsorship must be made to be the same as it is for a child with respect to his mother or father, and the same conditions must apply. These conditions are linked namely to security, health, and financial requirements.

l'AQAADI postulates that broadening this notion will not create a host of undesirable immigration files, but will simply make it possible to have additional guarantees in cases where parents are not in a position to do the job given the scope of the situation.

I see that my time is almost up. Give me another 120 seconds, and I will apologize to other members of the panel.

**The notion of conjugal partner must also be reviewed, because the wording of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations is very general. The definition contained in the regulations is as follows:** “conjugal partner” in relation to a sponsor, a foreign national residing outside Canada who is in a conjugal relationship with the sponsor and has been in that relationship for at least one year.

There is no common residency requirement.

The administrative interpretation that is given, as you will see on pages 13 to 18 of our brief, goes well beyond the general terms of the regulations. It would be desirable to clarify, in the regulations, what the real guidelines are. In fact, once again, absurd situations can occur.

•(1445)

I will conclude my remarks on this issue by saying this. Imagine a couple where one person is French from France, and the other is from Canada: members of this couple do not want to put an end to their economic activities.

Under the guideline, this couple would not fit into the family category, since these people would not be considered conjugal partners. They would be virtually forced to get married, whereas, according to the regulations and the broad wording, they could, provided that sufficient proof exists, be part of the family-class category.

In order to respect the constitutional right of this kind of union, l'AQAADI recommends the addition of a definition of conjugal relationship, to prevent any uncertainty and to respect the rights of each person.

That concludes my comments. I thank you very much for your indulgence.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you. You had 117 seconds.

**Mr. Patrick Caron:** Thank you very much. That leaves three seconds for the others.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you.

We will now move on to Mr. Kenneth Narvey, who is the Legal Researcher and Chief Operating Officer for the Coalition of Concerned Congregations on the Law relating to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity including those of the Holocaust.

[English]

**Mr. Kenneth Narvey (Legal Researcher, Chief Operating Officer, Coalition of Concerned Congregations on the Law relating to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity including those of the Holocaust):** Ladies and gentlemen, I had an hour and a half with you this morning, because nobody turned up. So I have very little to say, and I will try to say it quickly.

I was speaking with Mr. Siksay at the break, and he said, are you on the second panel? I said no, I have nothing to say about professional qualifications. He said, I am sure you will think of something. I thought of something.

My sister is a physician in California and a Canadian citizen. I don't know the details of it, but she went through a process under the Medical Board of California of studying and passing exams, and she now practises medicine in the state of California. My suggestion is that on the question of international qualifications, this committee might look at what is done in various other jurisdictions, such as with the medical profession of California, and find out if there is a model anywhere that Canada could consider adopting. Of course, if we can make an even better one, that would be even better.

Secondly, somebody said to me this morning that they didn't know that my organization was interested in family reunification. I said this morning, and I will say it again, I was very moved by the presentation of the Vietnamese community. They seemed very similar to the people I knew who had been trying from World War II, and even before it, to open the doors of Canada to Jewish

immigration. These people are in the situation that we were in, and if we can help them, we ought to do so.

While speaking to this person, I said that talking about war crimes doesn't mean only talking about the perpetrators, but also talking about helping the victims. The Vietnamese in the Philippines appear to have been victims, first, of their own government in Vietnam, who discriminated against them as being of Chinese ethnic origin, or being middle-class, or not being members of the Communist Party, and they were not treated entirely as they ought to have been in the Philippines either.

I also said to Mr. Siksay at the break, there are people who say that the Nazis persecuted the Jews simply because they were Jews. I said no, that the Nazis persecuted the Jews simply because they were Nazis. It is not statelessness that makes you a victim; it is how a stateless person is treated. It is not part of statelessness if you can't send your children to school. If the Philippines will not allow stateless Vietnamese to send their children to school, that is not an incident of statelessness, but an incident of the Philippines' treatment of statelessness. In Canada, all you need to do to go to school is be a child.

I am sorry that I was out during much of the presentation by Ms. Williams on statelessness, but she and I spoke afterwards, and we found that we didn't disagree all that much. What I was saying is that there are real concerns about statelessness, but there has been an unfortunate attempt by some persons before this committee to use statelessness as a shield. To say that the citizenship of my colleague in the unit that was killing people can be taken away because he comes from a country that hasn't taken away his prior citizenship, but don't take away my citizenship because I come from a country that won't give me back my prior citizenship....

I love this.... It doesn't appear very well on the transcript, but both Mr. Telegdi and Madame Faille use a football—or is it television—signal that means speed it up, wrap it up.

That is essentially what I wanted to say. Canada must continue to have the warm heart that it does, but also not treat the guilty as innocent.

Thank you.

•(1450)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you very much.

We will continue. As I was saying, since there are many committee members and witnesses, we are going to try to respect the time allocated and to limit ourselves to five minutes. You will have the opportunity to provide a more detailed response following questions from committee members.

We will now go to the National Association of Canadians of Origins in India. I give the floor to Ms. Flora Almeida Marlow.

[English]

**Ms. Flora Almeida Marlow:** Many people have this problem in having their families reunited. Many times children are here and parents are far away, or vice versa. People want to feel like a unit and to belong. So we must, as a community, try to help speed the process.

We must not, however, lose sight of the other side of the question. Many times Indian males, or Asian males, go back to their country of origin to find a bride. Often the bride comes here only to find difficult conditions and mistreatment. So we want to help to reunify families, but we also have to take into account the case of many young females who come to this country ill-equipped for life here. Many times it's not long before they find themselves with a divorce on their hands that they're not able to cope with.

So don't forget to look at the other side of the coin. Women who come here can be left without a family, without money, in very bad conditions with no backing. We have to realize that things can go wrong in family reunification. When this happens, who helps these vulnerable brides who come from different countries? In the case of elderly parents, who's going to help them when they are abused by the system?

It's a beautiful idea to reunify families and allow them to enjoy the little things in life. But we should also consider how we can protect them when things go wrong.

Thank you.

● (1455)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you very much.

I turn the floor over to Ms. Georgette Hetti from the Rassemblement Canadien pour le Liban.

**Ms. Georgette Hetti (Rassemblement Canadien pour le Liban):** Good afternoon. I am a member of the Rassemblement canadien pour le Liban (Canadian Association for Lebanon). The RCPL is a non-profit organization that works to promote human rights and democracy in Lebanon.

First of all, I would like to talk about the program for sponsoring a family member. There is a problem with it because of the constant increase in the amount of the sponsor's salary required. This increase presents a difficulty for new immigrants who have to deal with problems regarding foreign credentials as well as an increased job shortage, which prevents them from finding adequately remunerated employment during their early years here. The problem could be solved in part if the act were to take into account as well the assets of relatives living abroad, but adding them to the sponsor's salary. This could be done by requiring a guarantee from the sponsored relatives, certifying their ability to meet their own needs before they arrive in Canada.

Second, I would like to talk about the general delay in processing the family reunification files of refugees. The long delays often result from an administrative delay, repeated medical examinations, the requirement to produce documents which are often difficult to obtain at advanced stages in the file processing system. This is true of documents regarding the security check, for example. We would

propose the creation of a mechanism to speed up the processing of these files, particularly medical examinations and security checks from the beginning of the file processing system.

We would also like to tell you about our serious concerns regarding a possible lack of confidentiality regarding the processing of refugees' family files. At the Canadian embassy in Damas. Darcy Egglestone, the person formerly in charge of security there, has revealed that the Canadian visa applications submitted in Damas are sorted by Syrian employees without any supervision from the Canadian officials, and the niece of the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Farouk Chareh, is one of these employees. Mr. Egglestone said that people working in a police state such as Syria know that the country's secret police, the Mukhabarat, regularly questions employees working at the Canadian embassy. We do not know whether the employees co-operate with the secret police or are loyal to their employer, the Canadian embassy.

These people have limited access to information, but there is an exception made in the case of immigration files. These Syrian citizens prepare all the files before sending them to a Canadian immigration officer. Are they supervised when they do this? Yes, by a Syrian official in the basement of the embassy, where no Canadian officers work. The comments made by Mr. Egglestone have been corroborated by Richard Kurland, an immigration lawyer, and by Don Cameron, a retired public servant, who spent 29 years working in immigration services in nine Canadian embassies in the Middle-East and elsewhere. He said that Mr. Egglestone's statements were very credible. We therefore urge you to react to these serious security flaws, which expose refugees' families to serious retaliation, either in Lebanon or in Syria.

Third, I would like to talk about refugees' right to appeal. In a number of cases, refugees were in front with a legal vacuum and had a number of their rights violated, because there is no effective appeal procedure in place. For example, we describe the case of a Lebanese family that arrived in Canada in the year 2000. This family fled Lebanon because of a political conflict and asked for refugee's status. At the beginning of the processing of their file, in 2002, two years later, the Board said that one of these individuals was not eligible. It was decided that this person could not ask for refugee status because the individual was suspected—without foundation—of having committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. Despite this serious decision, under the current legislation, particularly the appeal procedures to which refugee claimants are entitled, it was impossible to protect this individual's rights and to allow him or her to present a defence against one of the most serious charges that can be levelled against someone.

● (1500)

The decision to deprive this individual of the right to qualify to claim refugee status was based on suspicions that had not been verified. Rather, even the Lebanese military courts, which were among the fears of this individual, issued a verdict against this person that included no charge of war crimes or crimes against humanity, as suspected by the officers from Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The decision made by these officers, and the fact that there is no effective appeal procedure only exacerbated the violation of this individual's right to be presumed innocent, as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The sadest thing about this case is that it is not unique. There are about ten other individuals in the same situation who faced the same problem. However, so far, there are serious reasons that lead us to think that refugee claimants could be tortured and badly treated if they were deported to Lebanon.

An effective appeal procedure could have guaranteed the right of these individuals to defend themselves, and would have contributed to a more justified decision regarding whether or not these people qualified for refugee status, or their conviction for indictable offences.

A decision of this type has an impact not only on the individual, but also on the entire family, including the spouse and even the children born in Canada, who will be deported from their country of birth. Such a tragedy only shows the need to give refugee claimants all the legal protection to which they are entitled, as is accorded to all other Canadian citizens or residents.

We think a right to appeal must be established quickly.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you.

We will continue with the representative from the Communauté catholique congolaise of Montreal.

**Mr. Alfred Lukhanda (Communauté Congolaise du Canada):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My colleague and myself have some concerns we would like to present to the committee. The first has to do with the discrimination faced by the black francophone minority of Canada. When we look at the statistics, we realize that it takes nine months at the visa offices in Rome, Colombo and Beijing to finalize 30 per cent of the cases, while it takes 23 months at the Abidjan office. If it takes 17 months at the Rome visa office to finalize 80 per cent of the cases it receives, it takes 36 at the Abidjan office. While it takes 11 months, less than a year, at the New Delhi visa office to finalize 80 per cent of the cases, it takes 31 months at the Abidjan office. The black francophone minority therefore got the impression that it may not be welcome in Canada.

We have some suggestions to make. One is to send a mission to black francophone Africa to determine the reasons for the delays at the Abidjan office and to open a Canadian embassy in the second-largest francophone country, so that people feel Canada is trying to encourage francophones to emigrate to Canada.

The second point has to do with the concept of family. We have realized that what is called a family in Canada is the nuclear family. The fact is that most people who come to Canada as refugees or immigrants have a much broader concept of family. In Somalia—this is the example I give in my brief—when someone dies, the other members of the family look after the children exactly as if they were their own. That is why we cannot understand how people can abandon their nephews, cousins or close relatives once they come to Canada. We would like the Canadian immigration policy to be more

in tune with cultural diversity, particularly where the best interests of the child are stake. We assumed that Canada wants to be a multicultural community, a rainbow. We do not understand how its immigration policy can be so restrictive as regards other ways of defining the family.

The third point has to do with the arbitrary nature of the ratio whereby 60 per cent of the immigrants are economic immigrants and 40 per cent non-economic immigrants. In our opinion, this breakdown does not promote family reunification or the arrival of refugees.

The fifth point has to do with the provision regarding the excluded family member, which was just mentioned. As was explained earlier, this provision penalizes all those who, out of ignorance or forgetfulness, do not mention or report a member of their family. Once they get here, they can no longer do so. Rather than opting for a safeguard cause, as my colleague proposed, we are calling quite simply for the repeal of this provision.

The sixth point has to do with child refugees who come to Canada having been separated from their parents. We would have hoped these children could sponsor their parents, their brothers and sisters and even, in keeping with the proposals to broaden the concept of the family, any individual that had acted as a parent to them.

The seventh point has to do with the emergency procedure for high-risk children. Some countries are war zones. Some are even under a moratorium which prevents Canada from deporting people there. If Canada cannot deport individuals to these countries for reasons of safety, it would be understandable if it were to get these children out of the war zones as quickly as possible. Otherwise, these children are recruited as child soldiers or die while waiting for family reunification. That has happened in the past, and this is discussed in the reports I mentioned.

In its latest directive, CIC says that the two parents should be absent in order for the children to benefit from the emergency procedure. Our view is that in a war zone, the presence of one parent does not shield the child from the bullets. In addition, in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, we can talk about... [*Inaudible...*] over the last ten years.

● (1505)

As a result of the report by the expert from the UN office of the High Commissioner on human rights, which has just been published, we would expect that urgent action would be taken to get these children out of these war zones. Of course, there are recommendations on each point. You will find all this in detail in the report.

The last point has to do with DNA. We recommend that DNA tests be the last resort, because this is a costly procedure. In addition, we hope to be able to use alternatives in order to prove family ties.

Thank you. I am prepared to answer any questions you may have.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** That is impressive, you took only five minutes. Thank you.

We will begin our questioning. Would you like to begin, Ms. Guergis?

[English]

**Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, and thank you to all of the witnesses for being here today. We very much appreciate the time that you've taken.

It has been a long couple of weeks. Although I have not participated in all of the tour, I have had many witnesses in front of me in Ottawa.

I'm going to comment a little on the broadening of family class. It's something we have heard a lot about. Many people suggest that we should increase the overall number of people we bring into Canada on a yearly basis. Many times it has been explained that there are many economic benefits to new Canadians having the opportunity to have their own communities, and that it would help us with some retention issues that we have in different parts of the country.

There's no doubt that the length of time and the hurdles one has to leap over to get into Canada take too long. We need to improve on that, but I have some concerns about it.

If we broaden the family class, how do we ensure that we don't get into a situation where one family member is waiting a couple of years for one or two relatives and another family is successful in getting many of their family members here? I think this is probably something we struggle with now. How do we prioritize it to ensure something like that doesn't happen?

● (1510)

**Mr. Patrick Caron:** To actually answer your question as simply as possible, I would rather say that on the issue of comparing family success rates, if we broaden the rules, it would go towards making sure family members to whom we grant the right to become respondents would again basically remain under the rules for close family members. Essentially, I'm saying that over a very long period of time, practically speaking, we believe it would be nearly impossible to have all family members brought into Canada through one exception or another. Everybody knows about the exception for the last family member. That also sometimes gets attention.

In circumstances such as this one, on a practical level, if the family unit of mother, father, brothers, and sisters is going to be reunited at some point through humanitarian, last family class, or any other means, to me it would be a very simple and yet non-risky way to proceed to broaden it, with the same conditions of financial requirements and security requirements as we indicated prior to your question. As we said earlier, at first glance the scope of the act is not totally well served if some family members can indeed be in Canada while brothers and sisters remain outside, uneducated, and completely apart from one another.

It's to keep the family class still in a tight circle. I would say that the circle of trust—to quote a movie that's very popular nowadays—for close family members, without broadening it too much, would be the position to resolve the problem simply.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Do you have any other questions, Ms. Guergis?

You have the floor, Mr. Clavet.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I feel a little like an immigrant or a refugee with seven officers trying to reduce my space. I will try to get back in five minutes. I am very pleased to feel like an immigrant, but not when it means being squeezed like that.

Some of Ms. Hetti's allegations are troubling and concern me greatly. The presence of a member of the secret police, at the Canadian embassy, should revolt us, and that is my reaction, if this allegation is true. There is something worse than torturing an individual: and that is closing one's eyes to torture. We saw that in the case of Maher Arar. Are the people at the embassy you referred to closing their eyes to a human rights' violation. I would like to hear what you have to say about this.

**Ms. Georgette Hetti:** I will tell you quite frankly that we do have some fears. The gentleman who wrote this article went over there. He was in charge of security at the Canadian embassy. He was Canadian. He described what he saw while he was in Damas. We always have some fears, because everyone knows how the system and politics work in Syria. Frankly, it is troubling for all of us.

We cannot really say that we saw this, but I do have some fears. When I read the article written by this person, it seemed to me that these fears were well-founded.

● (1515)

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** We will certainly check into this.

This time my question is to Mr. Lukhanda.

Discrimination against the black francophone community in Canada is of great concern to me as well. I certainly do not challenge what you say. I have seen it for myself. The figures are shocking. You suggested sending a mission to black francophone Africa to see whether that is where the problem starts, whether the information being provided is accurate and to explain why there seems to be discrimination.

How did you actually see that discrimination was going on? You spoke about statistics comparing Abidjan with other cities. Can this type of information be verified?

**Mr. Alfred Lukhanda:** I was referring to a specific case, family reunification. I wanted to start by using the information available, that is the statistics that are published.

It is true that the office in Abidjan is recognized as being the slowest one. When we look at the number of countries served by the Abidjan office, we see that, curiously, they are francophone countries. You can see the list. We had only to take one more step in order to reach our conclusion.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Do we have to go over there to get an answer? Can we get it here?

**Mr. Alfred Lukhanda:** I think that work must be done on both sides. First of all, there must be an objective realization that there are holdups and find out why it is only at the Abidjan office that they occur. I think that it is a family reunification problem. The key is to be found overseas. So that is where it will be necessary to find out why these holdups are occurring, and why things are working better in Colombo, Rome and New Delhi. People who deal with those offices take less than a year to come to Canada whereas it takes 36 months for those dealing with Abidjan. That means 36 months during which families are broken up.

I won't attempt to list all the consequences of family breakup since there have been reports by the Canadian Refugee Council as well as the Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes, the TCRI. I think these reports are quite clear about the consequences. Considering the indifference to these consequences and the fact that the affected group is a minority, one may be tempted to conclude that francophones are perhaps not welcome.

That is why I would like the matter to be investigated. We have made three proposals.

There is something else I find strange. The second largest francophone country in the world after France is Canada. The country is as large as a continent and it attracts a lot of people but strangely enough, this francophone country does not even have an office. I am not making any judgment, I am simply observing the fact and I am tempted to come to a conclusion. This is a collective report. I cannot take responsibility for it myself, however I do take full responsibility for what I am saying. I cannot understand that the second largest francophone country after France, Canada, such a huge country with several million French-speaking inhabitants, is not attentive to this particular aspect of the Francophonie. As I see it, it is a problem of sensitivity, if there is a true desire to promote francophone immigration. On April 18th, or last week, the 20th anniversary of article 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was celebrated. I was mentioning that the French-speaking black minority did not really join in this celebration because looking at the statistics, it did have the distinct impression that it was the victim of a certain type of discrimination.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you. You are continuing to impress me. That was exactly five minutes.

Mr. Siksay, you have the floor.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank you for your testimony.

[English]

I have a comment for Madame Hetti with regard to the refugee cases, what you raised about the need for an appeal for refugee cases.

I'm sure you know that the committee has taken a very strong stand on the need for a refugee appeal division. That is part of IRPA. It was a proposal of the government. It's never been implemented by the government, and it's something that many of us around the table have taken the minister—both ministers, in recent months—and the

government to task on in almost any forum we can find. The committee has been very strong on that recommendation.

Even with the limitations of the refugee appeal division, the paper appeal—it's not the greatest—I think everybody who works in the field recognizes that this would be an important addition to our process and one that we really do need to address without any further delay. I strongly support your comments there.

I have a question for Monsieur Caron and Monsieur Lukhanda. You both spoke about the excluded family members, although, Monsieur Caron, you suggested a safety clause, and Monsieur Lukhanda, you suggested a repeal of the clause. I wonder if you could address that.

Most people who have come before the committee have suggested repeal, so Monsieur Caron, your suggestion is a little different. I wonder if you can talk about why your organization didn't go to repeal, and maybe, Mr. Lukhanda, you might respond as well.

• (1520)

[Translation]

**Mr. Patrick Caron:** I prefer to answer you in French so that I may express my ideas more clearly. I apologize for my English. I should note that in the practice of my profession, I do have the opportunity to speak Cambodian.

The Quebec Immigration Lawyers Association takes a favourable view of the application of a safeguard clause since it cannot go along with people taking advantage of the immigration system for the processing of files that would not otherwise be eligible. This is merely a question of equity. Of course, it is always possible to find loopholes in the legislation. As an association of jurists, the QILA cannot go along with tolerance for this type of abuse. It is because of this abuse that a large number of restrictions have been added to most of the legislative corpus. We need only mention the example of the family and spouse categories. We know full well that the interview process is so strict that a certain number of applications will be turned down even if the couples are in good faith. It is because of the abuses that there is this excessive strictness.

As for the safeguard clause, it does allow for the achievement of the aims of the act, with which we are in agreement. However, we would like to see a certain degree of flexibility giving the immigration officer the discretion to note that a mistake was made in good faith. Revoking the rule as it is now would perhaps not be necessary. Our proposal would allow us to avoid the undesirable effect and at the same time respect the reason for which the government set up this regulatory provision. We do however wish to emphasize that the QILA is very much in favour of eliminating the scourge of false representations and attempts to bypass the law. That is the foundation for our position.

I hope that that answers your questions and that I did respect the time limit.

**Mr. Alfred Lukhanda:** In my opinion, a legal system cannot be based on risk. Let's take the case of Canadian immigration policy. It cannot be based on the struggle against terrorism. This kind of approach would be flawed. We cannot develop legislation in this way. The law is based on balanced relationships within society.

As far as this provision is concerned, I do not wish to emphasize the possibility of appeal because that is a natural element of any legal system and we work on the supposition that it would exist. Not only is provision made to this effect in the law, but it is something that must exist of necessity because any legal system does provide for recourse since anyone can make a mistake. *Errare humanum est*. There must be some way of rectifying what was done.

A legal system without appeal is a blind system. It is not possible to envisage such a legal system since it does not allow for the correction of human mistakes or human malice—since such a thing exists—not to mention the lack of practical training referred to by the first group.

So there is the assumption that an appeal exists or should exist. We did not even raise the matter here, we presume that it does exist. Our proposal was revocation. When a person makes false statements, since that is what we are talking about, the person would be ineligible for two years, after which he or she would be eligible once again. On the other hand, if because a mistake was made or for one reason or another a family member forgets to mention something, then he is ineligible for life. That is unacceptable, not only because the provision of the act allows for no recourse, but as a matter of simple humanity.

• (1525)

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you. Merci.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** I'm sorry, but I am unable to speak French.

[English]

I am very interested in listening to some of the commentary, particularly as it pertains to the appeal. One of the issues we are dealing with as a committee is the Citizenship Act, which applies to six millions Canadians not born in this country. From listening to your comments about there being no appeal, I think you should be aware of it, and I trust that you probably are not, because you didn't come to speak to it this morning. From listening to your commentary, I think you probably would.

I wasn't born in this country; I came here as a refugee. But at the present time, citizenship revocation is done on the report of one judge, who makes a determination on the balance of probability. There is no appeal of that decision or finding of fact of that one judge; it doesn't exist. Then it goes in front of cabinet in a Star Chamber process, and then your citizenship can be revoked.

To give you an example of the cases I have been looking at that have been before the courts, these cases involve asking whether you told the truth or lied on a question that might or might not have been asked 50 years ago. There is no proof that the question was asked, and you decide on the balance of probability, which is 51% to 49%—that is the balance of probability. It is something I have been working very hard to get changed, because it really does not

recognize section 7 of our Charter of Rights as it pertains to our citizenship.

I put this out not because I want you to enter a debate about it, but just to look it up. The act is chapter C-29 of the Revised Statutes of 1985; that is the Citizenship Act, and it is one of the acts we are looking to address. It came into place before the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and it is very important that we have as many people as possible across this country address that particular issue. I agree with what Mr. Siksay said, that we as a committee have pushed hard to have the appeal included in the refugee appeal division.

Getting back to the citizenship stuff, I maintain that this makes all of us who were not born in this country—and half the members of the citizenship and immigration committee were not born in this country, and two of us are refugees—second-class Canadians, and it is of great concern. So is it of great concern to the rest of the colleagues on this committee.

I put this to you because we are dealing with it. You can go to the citizenship committee website. We issued a report on this a while back, but now we are going to be doing the final report to the government addressing this very important issue. Just listening to what you were saying....

Madame Hetti, you said there are two children who were born in this country who are going to be deported? Well, you can't deport children, but you are saying they have to go because their parents are going. Am I correct?

• (1530)

[Translation]

**Ms. Georgette Hetti:** Yes.

[English]

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** I am troubled by those cases. What we have done, Madam Chair and members of the committee.... A lot of times—it is an honoured kind of tradition—when we try to establish peace in a troubled part of the world, we offer sanctuary to various people to get them out of the region. If they stay in the region they become very much involved in a problem of trying to deal with the issues, and this is a long-standing situation that exists. Let us suppose we have some kind of peaceful resolution in the Middle East. There are some people who are not going to win any humanitarian awards, but who cannot stay in that part of the world. If they stay, they are going to jeopardize the peace that has been created.

I just throw that out because it has caused me some concern, and I think it is something committee members might think about.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Does someone have a quick comment to make?

**Mr. Félicien Ngankoy (Youth Coordinator, Communauté Congolaise du Canada):** Good day.

My name is Félicien Ngankoy and I am from the Congolese community.

I had the opportunity to take part in a teleconference with the Canadian Council of Refugees and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. I realized, as my colleague Alfred Lukhanda noted, that there was indeed discrimination at the Abidjan office because there are problems in these regions. That is something you can perhaps verify.

Let me return to the comments made by the honourable member about children who are compelled to leave because their parents are deported.

It is true that there is recourse when parents are deported, as the Minister of Immigration mentioned two weeks ago. He was referring to appeals for humanitarian reasons; it must be determined whether a person runs the risk of being tortured upon being returned to his country. However such conditions do not necessarily result in recourse because the right of appeal as provided in the 2002 act has unfortunately never been implemented to date. For example, a person who is afraid of being tortured upon return to his country must be in possession of a passport in order for a verification to take place. He must present a passport to immigration before filling out the form. But why would a refugee who left his country, who has no contact with the embassy, with no travelling document or passport, contact the authorities of his country? That would amount to disclosing that he is here and that he fled. But without a passport he is not entitled to a risk assessment before being sent back. Consequently, in most cases, parents leave with their children even though they may have been born here in Canada.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Mr. Lukhanda, did you have something to say?

**Mr. Alfred Lukhanda:** I simply wanted to mention my concern about the revocation of citizenship.

There are certain countries that do not accept dual nationality. An individual with Canadian nationality would therefore no longer have the nationality of his country of origin. If his citizenship is revoked, then this person would become stateless. Would that not give rise then to another problem?

That is something that worries me.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Would you like to answer?

**Mr. Kenneth Narvey:** May I say something?

[English]

I was interested in what Mr. Telegdi just said about Canada contributing to Middle East peace. Of course, if Canada can contribute to Middle East peace, Canada should contribute to Middle East peace.

There is a difficult question that I don't know the answer to, but I would like to mention something about it.

You had a witness before you, I think on the same day as the Vietnamese community was here, who was from a committee of Palestinians in Montreal. He spoke about stateless Palestinians and asked your help in reuniting his family, in bringing his wife here. I don't know the answer to his situation, but it did raise a number of questions.

One is that his wife, if I understood him correctly, was in Jordan. My understanding is that Lebanon does not treat Palestinians properly. You are not allowed, if you are a Palestinian in Lebanon, to practise medicine—in Israel, yes; in Jordan, yes; but in Lebanon, no. Again, it is not just statelessness that is the problem; it is the way people are treating you that is the problem. My understanding is that Palestinians are full citizens in Jordan, so I am not sure whether what he was describing to you is correct or not.

He also said he had a certificate from the Gaza municipality that his house had been destroyed. Now, I don't know whether his house was destroyed by a fire, or during a military confrontation, or in a program the Israelis have now suspended because they have decided it is not a good idea. It seemed like a good idea at the time—if there was a suicide bomber, the house of the suicide bomber would be blown up. Is it that his house was blown up because a member of his family was a suicide bomber? I have no idea.

These are complicated questions. In terms of the technicalities of international law, in the definition Mr. Clavet was reading from article 1 in the Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons, there is an exception for persons who are being dealt with by another United Nations program, and there is the same exception in the refugee convention. That essentially means Palestinians.

On the other hand, Canada is not obliged to copy every line out of an international convention, particularly one to which it is not a party. If there are ways in which we can assist the Middle East peace process, let us do so. I am not sure exactly....

May I ask you a question? Andrew, who did you have in mind?

• (1535)

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** I had the whole question of this SLA. I had that consideration.

**Mr. Kenneth Narvey:** I personally—

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** I mean, there are other people, but I am just saying we want to be open to the possibility of helping peace to be maintained once it is made—

**Mr. Kenneth Narvey:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** —and this is the way you can do it. I think we did that with the Irish and Ireland and what have you.

**Mr. Kenneth Narvey:** In two words, I agree.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** If there are no further comments, then we will call this meeting to a close.

Once again, I would like to thank you and repeat that we very much appreciate your contribution and the information you have provided us with. We will give particular attention to all of the testimony we have heard. The report will soon be available. Let us hope that the election will take place as late as possible so that we can conclude our study.

Thank you very much.

•(1538)

(Pause)

•(1556)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** I would now like to call the meeting to order since our presenters are now here and we have quorum. I would like to welcome all of you. I recognize some faces.

I wish to stress the importance of the exercise in which we are now involved. We have been very careful in our choice of subjects. The question of family reunification is of great importance to us. Your comments will be taken into account in the drafting of our report. I would invite you to be generous in providing us with information, although there are certain time restrictions. I will be limiting each of your representations to five minutes. You will then have an opportunity to elaborate on your opinion in your answers to questions put to you by members of this panel. Thank you.

Mr. Siner, since it is your first presentation, we wish you good luck. Let me reassure you that you are dealing with a group of people who are very motivated and very much interested in the question of family reunification. You have nothing to fear. Without any further ado, I turn the floor over to you.

**Mr. David Siner (As an Individual):** Thank you.

I will be making my presentation in English since it will be easier for me.

[English]

I would like to open by thanking all of you for your time and for being willing to listen to me. Thank you very much. I also know that you are well aware of the situation. Actually, I've heard that you've been hearing for a long time from people like me about this problem.

As a representative of too many Canadians who are facing the immoral and unlawful policy of the Canadian government regarding family reunification, I, like over 220,000 people every year, came to Canada as a landed immigrant out of choice. And it really was my choice to come to Canada. On top of that, I chose to come to Quebec as my final destination, even though I don't have a Quebec *certificat de sélection*. I work in the pharmaceutical domain, and I really wanted to come here and try to work in this field. I'm really happy that I can do that right now.

Like other people, I came to Canada not before I learned about and explored the Canadian way and tradition, especially the democratic tradition of equality, liberty, and dignity. Naturally, as immigrants we face many challenges that we all have to cope with and that we are willing to cope with. But not even in my worst nightmares did I imagine that I would be treated with such disrespect by the CIC, who gave me, like other immigrants, the false impression that once we met some very strict and sometimes hard-to-digest conditions, we would be able to be reunited with our loved ones.

A major factor in my decision to come to Canada was the fact that Canada welcomes parents and grandparents and works for the reunification of families. So I was really, really disappointed to find out that this is not really the case. Instead, we are facing a shameless and immoral policy where we are actually charged thousands of dollars in processing fees and there is no intention whatsoever to

even look into our applications, therefore keeping us separated from our parents—on purpose and forever.

Moreover, recently we have been faced with the attempt to go one step further—that is, the spreading of false announcements that measures are going to be taken to correct the situation. Actually, first somebody created the situation, and now somebody else is trying to fix things by telling us that the number of accepted family members is going to be tripled, from 6,000 to 18,000 a year. That is exactly like treating cancer patients with a Tylenol per day and trying to make the patients happy with the quality of the treatment they're getting. As lawful, hard-working Canadians, we cannot and will not be fooled by false announcements about raising quotas to 18,000 a year while 100,000 human beings are waiting for CIC to process their applications and treat them in a humane way.

People like me are always overwhelmed with sympathy as expressed by politicians and public activists. We do not need any sympathy. We need action. I would like to ask you for your support and understanding, each and every one of you, and hope that each one of you will be able to really act upon the situation.

We are seeking a complete solution, not only a partial solution. You probably know that the process of bringing families to Canada is a complex one. First you have to apply to the CPC in Mississauga. Then, as a Quebec resident, my file is probably going to be transferred to the Quebec office. Only then, after all the problems here in Canada, will my parents be able to apply back in their homeland for a visa. That took forever before; maybe now, under the new announcement, it'll take forever minus a second. I don't really think anything is going to be changed.

I really hope the committee will act upon this problem and find a complete solution that goes from the day the application is submitted to the moment when we get the visas. The way it was before, which I think was a wonderful way to do things, it took maybe six months to a year. I cannot understand why it cannot take six months to a year right now.

•(1600)

I also wish to express that as a Quebec resident my file is going to be submitted to the Quebec immigration office. I would like to see the Quebec immigration office deal with it exactly as it should be dealt with.

As a Quebec resident, I think the Quebec government can do more, and can issue a *certificat de sélection du Québec* under certain circumstances, for instance, when it applies to elderly people, or if I am an only child. They should try to help us more in those respects. I think that's possible, because the Quebec government has a certain type of autonomy in this case, and I expect the Quebec government to do something about it, even though this is not the forum to say that. It's possible to do that as well, just to help.

For instance, the Quebec files can be transferred immediately to the Quebec office. There is no processing issue with the CPC in Mississauga. The file is transferred to the Quebec ministry, as is. So I don't understand why our files cannot be transferred immediately to the Quebec office and be treated there. That would just help with the load of CPC Mississauga.

Finally, I know that you know all the facts and details about this problem, and I don't want to take more of your time. I hope and wish that we will meet under different circumstances, and I will be able to thank you all for your actions.

Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you.

We will now hear from Ms. Félicité Tchapda from the Democratic Social Front.

**Ms. Félicité Tchapda:** Thank you.

For those who were not here earlier, I represent the Social Democratic Front, which is the main opposition party in Cameroon and a member of the Socialist International.

First of all, I would like to thank you for this initiative to meet the public and hear different points of view before making decisions. Canada is a country with citizens from all four corners of the world. I think that a theme like family reunification is truly welcome in that several immigrants when they leave their country of origin, leave behind wives, children, parents and friends. Family reunification is the only way to bring everyone back together again.

We think that the policy governing the conditions for sponsoring a parent or a family member needs to be reviewed. Currently, certain income requirements need to be met before a parent can be sponsored. In our view, that requirement is inequitable, in that it is vague and elastic.

How much do you have to earn annually to be entitled to a visit from a loved one? We understand that the person needs to be looked after from the moment they arrive here, but for a two-week or month-long visit, we do not feel that income should be a major factor in getting a visa. We just think it would be more fair to say that any parent is entitled to visit a child living in Canada.

Another condition that we consider unfair is the age of the person being sponsored. Currently, siblings, nephews, nieces or children have to be orphans under 18. Although 18 is the age of majority in Canada, it should be recognized that in a number of countries, including Cameroon, it is 21.

It is important to note that in a number of cultures, you do not have to be the eldest in the family to be able to help. In African culture, for example, you can help your brother if you are able to, whether he is older or younger than you. We think that the age limit is a factor that interferes with African culture, and Cameroonian culture in particular.

If the youngest member of a family arrives in Canada and is over 18, the chances of sponsoring anyone else in the family are reduced. Take my case, for example. I am the youngest in my family. When I arrived here, I was 18. That means that a member of my family wanting to come to Canada could not be sponsored by me. He would have to apply on his own.

The duration of sponsorship is very important. We note the slow processing of applications, in Abidjan, for example, which some participants pointed out earlier. You have to wait three years for an application to be dealt with. We strongly urge committee members to

accelerate the processing of applications, because family reunification is the only solution to enable immigrants to break out of the isolation they are forced to live in in many cases.

When you arrive in a country where you do not know anyone, the adaptation is rough. But the feeling that you are not alone, the love and support of loved ones are things that help you to thrive and get through the tough times of being uprooted.

With greater security and assurance, it may seem easier to live this new life. Do not forget that isolation has an adverse effect on health, and consequently on productivity. Having immigrants participate in building Canadian society also entails happy people, with *joie de vivre*, not people waiting for a letter from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, or people spending part of their income to buy calling cards in order to call their loved ones.

• (1605)

We know it and the studies prove it: a person in good psychological health is a balanced person, liable to produce and contribute to society.

We think that the committee should take a look at the annual cost of a person who is sick and a person on social assistance. The procedure that we read about on the Internet site suggests to us that the biggest fear of Immigration is that these people will go on welfare as soon as they arrive. Suppose that were so. Those people could get off welfare if they wanted to and if society helped them. For example, if an immigrant is isolated here and falls sick, that will cost the government more than an immigrant on social assistance. I believe that one day in hospital costs \$600, whereas social assistance isn't even \$600 per month.

We feel there's a need for flexibility and a review of the age conditions and especially the processing time for applications that seems at times endless, which discourages some and breaks apart several families; during the wait, you never know what might happen. Thank you.

• (1610)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you very much.

We are now going to hear from the *Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes*.

**Ms. Rivka Augenfeld (President, Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes):** Good afternoon. Thank you for having us and for coming to Montreal. That obviously makes our presentations a lot easier.

I won't repeat who we are, because I said so this morning. However, I would point out that the *Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes* is a grouping of multiple organizations that work in the field and every day see hundreds, if not thousands, of people faced with very long waiting times—which aren't actually necessary—for family reunification.

We believe that there are multiple causes for these delays. You are probably aware of them, through your work on this committee and in your respective ridings. The rest of the presentation will be in English, and we apologize for that. However, you can ask your questions in French and in English. My colleague, Mr. Richard Goldman, will do the bulk of the presentation.

[English]

**Mr. Richard Goldman (Coordinator, Refugee Protection, Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes):** Madam Chair, members of the committee, thank you once again for hearing us.

Our member groups and the people who have come to see us have an extremely strong interest in family reunification. One of the people who came to see us, Bernadette Rufonya, is here in the hall. She is a Burundian refugee who is trying to bring her five children here. If you would like to speak with her informally afterwards, she is available. She is part of an informal support group of people in the same situation.

As bad as the situation is for all people in the process, we would like to address two situations where families cannot even ask for family reunification. We feel there are relatively quick legal, legislative, or policy fixes available if the will can be found to implement them.

The two issues are excluded family members, and persons from moratoria countries. I am going to start with persons from moratoria countries. Then, if there is time, I will continue with excluded family members.

Here as well, because there is a strong interest within the community and our member groups, we have Dorothy Dubé and Wellington Mazongo, who are from a Zimbabwean community group. They took the initiative to bring their own statements, which I believe have been distributed to you. They too would be happy to take questions either in the question period or informally afterwards. Zimbabwe is one of the moratoria countries.

At any given time, Canada imposes a temporary suspension on removals to different countries, because of a situation of danger and unstable conditions in that country. This is a good thing. It involves avoiding the return of many thousands of people to war-torn or troubled countries. Of course, the persons benefiting from that moratoria, as with all refused refugees, cannot even start the long process of family reunification.

Most of these moratoria last quite a few years. For example, the moratoria on removals to Burundi and to Rwanda have now been in place for more than 11 years. We believe that once a certain period of time has passed it is necessary and humane to reconsider the situation of refused refugees from those countries.

A big part of the problem is how humanitarian and compassionate applications for persons in this situation are being processed. First of all, there is a three-year delay for all humanitarian and compassionate claims to be heard in Canada. We are talking about people who are paying a processing fee of \$550 per adult and \$150 per child.

When applications from people from moratoria countries are studied, it is something of an artificial exercise. The officer, unlike in

other situations, cannot consider the level of risk in the country of origin, because there is no present possibility of return to that country. The officer can only consider the strength of establishment in Canada.

In many humanitarian cases, it is a combination of the establishment in Canada and risk in the home country that shows hardship sufficient to merit a favourable approval. But this can't be looked at in the case of moratoria countries. The officer can only consider the establishment side in Canada. Some people, despite the fact that they are fleeing the ravages of war or facing family separation trauma, have extremely strong establishment and are accepted. Others have a more modest degree of establishment and integration. In our experience, those with more modest degrees of establishment, even some who are self-supporting with up to five years in Canada, are being refused.

We feel that such refusals are pointless and inhumane. We believe that, barring significant negative factors like criminality, most people who have been here under a moratorium for several years will ultimately be allowed to stay. We looked at a special program for Algerians, which was introduced after the lifting of the moratorium on Algeria. Under this program, more than 90% of claimants were ultimately allowed to stay.

• (1615)

Even in the absence of a special program, it seems fairly clear that if somebody is refused after, say, three or four years in Canada, they're very likely to be accepted after six years, after eight years, or after 10 years, when the moratorium is finally lifted. So the initial refusal pointlessly delays family reunification and prolongs suffering.

Our recommendation, therefore, is that a public policy be introduced for humanitarian and compassionate applications to the effect that three years of inability to return home due to a suspension of removals should, in the absence of significant negative factors, normally constitute sufficient, unusual, and undeserved hardship to merit a favourable H and C decision.

Do I have time to talk about excluded family members or do we have to come back to that?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** One minute.

**Mr. Richard Goldman:** Okay. Then I will just mention one case, which is presented here, that we would like to resolve in Montreal. It's the case of a woman who had to flee Burundi at age two and was raised in Rwanda. In the genocide of 1994, she was separated from her eight-year-old son. She was later sponsored to come to Canada. She was convinced that her son was dead, because neither the Red Cross nor anybody else could find him. Only after she arrived in Canada did she get the incredible news that her son had been found alive in Rwanda.

Since she thought her son was dead, she had not declared him on her permanent resident application. She has been trying to sponsor him since. She was refused under article 117(1)(9)(d) because she hadn't declared him. The immigration appeal division declined jurisdiction.

So it seems, as my colleagues from AQAADI and others were saying, this is a lifetime ban, despite the fact that we have no other lifetime penalties in Canada, and in effect, IRPA has changed an old proverb, one of the oldest we have: to err is human, except when it comes to family reunification.

I will leave it at that for now. Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you. Our next witness is Mr. Sanjiv Kumar, from the Human Rights Action Committee.

[English]

**Mr. Sanjiv Kumar (President, Human Rights Action Committee):** Honourable members of the standing committee and, of course, Chair, The Human Rights Action Committee is grateful to the committee for providing us a generous opportunity to present our views on the issue of family reunification.

Today many members of Human Rights Action Committee are sitting here, and many more are searching their maps to reach the Hotel InterContinental, because many may not be very good in French or English. So they must be finding their way and probably soon they will be here.

When we think about family reunification, our perspective is that there are three categories. The first category is the people without status who are here for years and years and who are away from their families, from their kids. We even have examples of people whose children have become old enough to get married, who are not with their father or their mother.

We have some members sitting here, and many who have now joined—those I was talking about, who were finding their way and who have now found us.

So that is one aspect, people who don't have any status. Normally when people talk about family reunification they are talking about immigrants who are already here and about the delay in the processing of the files of their families. But if we go through the last few days' developments relating to the whole issue, probably before the committee has completed its investigation, its research, and before it gives its recommendations, the honourable immigration minister has already given his solution to the whole problem, in that he declared last week that the parents of people whose processing is already complete can be given a multiple-entry visa for five years.

So probably the solution has already been given by the government. I don't know whether this report will be much use or not, in the sense that solutions are already given in some respect. But we would like to comment on that also, in the sense that, yes, it is true that it will be beneficial to some extent, especially as the parents will be in a position to meet with their children. But the family is not only the parents. There are other members who have to join the family, but they can join only when the processing of applications is complete. So although it is a partial solution and probably some

critics would say, well, this is more of an approach to make money for the immigration department, for the government, we think it is a good temporary solution for some people. But our perspective is to look at all the segments of this issue.

For the people without status, the government has not announced anything, though there has been a lot of news in the last few months that the government is doing something on regularization, because regularization is a solution to unify those who are living here without status with their families.

So Human Rights Action Committee strongly proposes, and we ask this committee to propose to the government, that this regularization issue is most important.

There is a second category of people whose family reunification we are talking about. For those who are already accepted refugees, their processing takes years and years, as many of our friends have already mentioned. So we need to know, once a person is accepted and his application can be processed for permanent residence here when he is in Canada, why his family's application cannot also be processed. Why can those members not be brought here and then go through the application process? So that is our second concern.

The third concern is with the third category we have already mentioned, and that is with the people who are already here and who are in the immigrant class. Something should be done to get their applications processed. Yes, a five-year multiple visa is a partial solution, but it is not the correct solution; the correct solution is that families be with each other, and that includes all the members—not excluding some and including some.

• (1620)

Another important thing we would like to emphasize is that whenever any regularization process is done, it should be all-inclusive, and it should have no discrimination.

Another important thing that is a concern of all those members who are present before the standing committee—we are just their voice, but they all feel that—is that the government is saying they are working on the regularization program. If I am correct, the honourable minister was present before the standing committee, and there he said that he intends to regularize around 100,000 people or something. So in that situation, why should the benefit of that not go to all? Why is it that Citizenship and Immigration has now hastened its process to deport people? We strongly recommend to the standing committee that deportation should be stopped right away, because the government and the minister have a plan to regularize people. If the people believe they will be deported after that, what is the use of any regularization process or solution?

Thank you very much. We have a lot of things to say, but I think time doesn't permit us.

I would especially thank the chair. The chair has provided us an opportunity to speak further in Quebec City, where an hour will be given to us to present our views. We will go there with more detail, and more aspects will be covered.

Thank you very much.

•(1625)

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** I would encourage the witnesses to give us more details. You will have an opportunity to answer questions from committee members.

I would remind you that we have a limited amount of time and that each intervention is to be under five minutes long.

Ms. Guergis.

[*English*]

**Ms. Helena Guergis:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks very much to all of the witnesses presenting today. We appreciate the time that you have taken to be with us.

It's not all new news to us. We have heard a lot of this in our travels, but we really appreciate some of the good advice that you have given today.

David, I appreciate your comments about the recent announcement that has been made. I know that all of us around the table welcome it, but it has taken a long time to get to that announcement. I'm sure many of us will believe it when we see it. We still have thousands of people who are on a waiting list, and as you said, it is just too long to go through the process. I am sorry it is taking so long in delays for you.

A couple of the policy suggestions you've made, Mr. Goldman, I think are very good recommendations. The first was the three-year inability, that if you can't return home they should automatically qualify—

**Mr. Richard Goldman:** Automatically might be overstating it, but it should be considered as a sufficient factor, because the minister has the possibility of issuing public policy statements on how humanitarian applications are to be processed.

**Ms. Helena Guergis:** I appreciate that recommendation.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Rivka Augenfeld:** There was a program when this government took office in 1993. In 1994, Minister Marchi launched a program called DROC. That program enabled people remaining in Canada three years after a refusal, who could not go back to their country, to make an immigration application under somewhat more flexible criteria. There was recognition that after a certain amount of time, you had to let people get on with their lives. For reasons we have never understood, a few years later, Ms. Robillard cancelled that program.

There is nothing that allows an officer considering H&C applications to relax the acceptance criteria. With respect to those applications, some positive discretion would be acceptable. For that, instructions are needed. The manual is not law; it could be amended to make it easier to accept H&C applications, by clarifying what harm is, because that word can be understood in various ways. That doesn't even require an amendment to the act; it requires an interpretation of the terms "humanitarian" and "compassionate" that is better suited to the circumstances.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** I was there in 1994. I was working for that department at that time.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

**Ms. Helena Guergis:** Thank you.

I also want to comment that I'm very pleased to hear that the mother you spoke of found her son. I think it's really crazy that in our country of Canada we don't have anything that makes an exception for those kinds of circumstances. Thank you for bringing that to my attention. All of us around the table here will continue to work on these issues, regardless of any announcements that are made on the side, because we understand there's a lot more work to be done.

•(1630)

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Mr. Clavet, would you like to intervene?

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

First, I would like to apologize to our guests for having missed Mr. Kumar's presentation. I had an important phone call. I will catch up during the coming hearings and I will read the documents. I have a great deal of respect for everyone here and for the whole community. I will study all the facts. I am sorry.

Mr. Goldman, you mentioned the example of Lea, born in Burundi. This situation, where someone finds her lost son and then has difficulties, is simply incredible. You want special treatment for cases like that. You want us to be more human and understanding. You are saying, more or less, that the immigration system, as it is now, does not provide for this kind of exceptions.

**Mr. Richard Goldman:** In Canada, there is no capital punishment. Even a murderer gets, at most, a 25-year sentence. Now a person loses eligibility for ever, whereas under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, other cases of false representation require a two-year penalty. We still fail to understand why they should remain ineligible for the rest of their lives. This provision was adopted two years ago, in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. As I said, we do not understand why no discretion at all is allowed. This is why we want to rescind this section.

If someone had good reasons for not declaring another person, as in the case I just described, an officer should have the discretion as to whether or not he should impose, at worst, the two-year suspension of eligibility already provided for by the act.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** I welcome your approach, as it is based on a humanitarian understanding of the problems. You say that once the three years are up and there is really no other option, the government should show some understanding. If three years have not been enough to prove the case through the available means, we should use our minds and hearts, and let these people in.

**Mr. Richard Goldman:** Indeed, I have heard that the Canadian government has temporarily suspended some expulsions. This means that the government recognizes that these people cannot return to their country. If, at the end of three years, and without any other negative factors such as criminality, the person still cannot be sent back to his country, we think that there should be more humanitarian directives whereby we can decide that the person has been in Canada long enough. Making them wait longer for permanent residency would be cruel and unusual punishment.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** I also have a comment for Mr. Siner, who said that he wanted action, not sympathy. I wholeheartedly agree with this.

Is it not rather odd to have a Quebec resident's case dealt with in Mississauga? We already have the obvious solution: sovereignty for Quebec. Some day, we will have our own immigration system and put an end to this nonsense. But then, I do not know if you will go that far. This was not the topic of my question, although we often have this in mind.

Do you think that we might create conditions where, at least, such cases could be dealt with here, and not all over the place? Would you go along with this?

**Mr. David Siner:** Absolutely. I would like my file to be dealt with here, in Quebec, as I am a Quebec resident. If my file must be dealt with here in due time, why is it not being done now?

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Would anyone else like to comment on the fact that cases are often dealt with in other venues because of the bureaucracy? Could we not centralize these operations?

**Ms. Félicité Tchapda:** The case I will describe happened in Africa, not Quebec. All files from Cameroon are currently dealt with in Côte-d'Ivoire. Let me mention the case of a young girl who got her baccalauréat, which is the equivalent to our senior matriculation. She applied to come here as a student a year and a half ago, but never got an answer. She went to the embassy in Yaoundé, where she was told that her file was being processed in Abidjan. In the end, we no longer know where to turn. She was never told whether or not her passport applications and all her other files had been accepted. When she showed up in Yaoundé, she was told that her file was being processed in Abidjan. Basically, people simply get lost in such situations.

• (1635)

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** The machinery is heavy.

Ms. Augenfeld.

**Ms. Rivka Augenfeld:** Here is my question: Does the current system fill the needs? Human beings are applying for residency or for family reunification. It is as if these people had to serve the system, although the system should be serving them. It might seem like a platitude, but that is how things are. Why should it take so long to process an ordinary file? When a file comes back from Vegreville, it is shelved in Montreal, and only opened three years later. Why? We are told that it is because of a lack of resources. But many things can happen during three years. Are resources not being wasted? Isn't the individual wasting years of his life? Three years later, we are told that these people have been here for too long and that they want to extend their stay in Quebec. This is to their disadvantage. The

system could be more efficient. People pay for this service, but insufficient resources are put into it.

As for family reunification, offices abroad do not have adequate resources given the number of cases in Africa and elsewhere, the number of offices and what people here are required to do to bring their family over. No doubt, other witnesses have told you that family members here have to act more or less like immigration officers and tell the person abroad how to send documents. People are required to send original documents, which are very precious. Some time ago, they made the requirement to send such documents here. There is a whole list of issues. We only raise two of these issues today.

In our daily work, we encounter all the problems that you have heard of in Canada. Today, we focused on the problem of people who cannot even make an application, but, of course, there are many other problems. The current system is also contrary to the interests of all Canadians and Quebecers. So many people waiting for such a long time is not good for the local population. This is unhealthy. It is of no benefit to anyone.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Mr. Kumar, do you have anything to add?

[English]

**Mr. Sanjiv Kumar:** Many times I have listened, even in CCR meetings, to some of the CIC officials. They talked about the resource issue last time in Toronto. They also discussed that we don't have enough resources to do things.

I just want to add a small thing. Rivka also referred to the issue of resources. I think there is no problem with resources in Canada; there's a problem with coordinating and organizing things properly. There's a huge money laundering problem in Canada, of which you're all aware. I don't want to mention much about it. There's a lot of money going to the wrong channels. That should be checked. There's a big illegal or parallel economy that needs to be checked.

Not only that, when we emphasize the regularization of the people, as mentioned by the honourable minister.... More than 100,000 people are working here and living here illegally, without status. Why not bring them into the mainstream? Then huge resources, billions of dollars, can be created and we can solve these problems. When we have enough of these resources tapped, they can generate employment. We can give employment to many Canadians, and the processing of applications can be done much faster.

Why not correct the system, rather than just finding excuses?

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** It makes sense.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you.

Mr. Siksay.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for your testimony this afternoon. It's been very helpful. There are lots of things to comment on or ask questions about, and there's not a lot of time. But I just want to say a few things.

Mr. Goldman mentioned the folks who came with him—Bernadette, Wellington, and Dorothy. I hope I'll have a chance to speak to you afterwards, because it's important to hear your stories as well. Thank you for coming.

It's always interesting when Mr. Kumar comes to the committee, because there's always this huge gathering of people who come with him. I have this image of him travelling through Montreal with this huge gathering of people around him all the time. I appreciate the importance of these issues to his community.

**Mr. Sanjiv Kumar:** There are fewer of us because we were aware there was less space. We would have brought more.

• (1640)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** I am staggered by that, but I appreciate all of you coming.

A couple of people have mentioned the announcement by the minister last week around parental and grandparental applications. There is some hope in that, but there are concerns, as Mr. Siner mentioned. This is a government that has made promises before on various things. In fact, it introduced but did not fully implement legislation in areas of immigration important to us, like the refugee appeal division.

So we want to be hopeful about that announcement, and we are glad there is new money associated with it, but I think we need to be vigilant and keep on the government to make sure they actually come through with the desired result from this. Given how starved the system is for money, it is easy to see that money disappearing into the system, which desperately needs it for so many things.

I think the point is well taken that it doesn't really address the backlog if we are not going to increase the overall numbers of immigrants to, hopefully, get closer to the 1% suggestion. And it doesn't even get us back to the 2003 level of 20,000 parents and grandparents. So there are lots of limitations associated with that announcement and lots of work on our part still to be done.

I think it came about because so many people have been so articulate about the problems, people like Mr. Siner and other people across the country who we've heard from, and people from this committee over recent months and in the past.

So I just wanted to flag the concern about that.

We have talked a little bit about people saying that it is not just a question of money. It seems to me that is a pretty significant question for a department that took such a huge cutback in the 1990s. Immigration and Environment took the heaviest cuts of any federal government departments when Mr. Martin started making his cuts to federal government spending. The immigration department has never recovered from that. We finally saw some new money in this recent budget for settlement, and just recently there is this new money associated with parents and grandparents. But there have been suggestions that there is an efficiency problem within the department, that the quotas imposed mean that once an embassy or

foreign post reaches the quota for the year, then they do nothing—they just shut down the processing for two or three months or more—and that there could be time spent there.

Do folks have any opinions on whether it is a question of money or resources? Do we need more money for this department, or are there ways of reorganizing or making other efficiencies that in your experience would be helpful to all of this?

**Mr. Sanjiv Kumar:** Just as you have raised this question, many other people have concerns about it. Both issues are important. We need more resources and we need replanning and efficient use of the resources. Both issues are important.

**Ms. Rivka Augenfeld:** I would say, absolutely, you need more resources in certain parts of the world, that's for sure. On the other hand, you also need to change attitudes and you need to do training. If, on the one hand, the department says they don't have enough resources, and then immigration or visa officers spend an enormous amount of time asking people for more documentation; doubting everything they say; asking them to send the documents they sent the year before; and asking them to do DNA testing when it is pretty clear that it is just an easy way out, because then they don't have to think too much; asking people to....

When Vegreville was conceived, it was supposed to deal with 80% of the cases. Now, Vegreville can't say no; they can only say yes. But the minute there is any question, they don't deal with it but send it back, and then it sits there. There is nothing that prevents the immigration officers in Vegreville from using a little bit of discretion, asking a few questions, and dealing with a case in a positive way and reducing dramatically the number of cases that get sent back to the local offices. This is something that has to do with attitude and training, with an approach that doesn't see.... I am not saying that all immigration officers are guilty of this; there are some excellent officers, but too often one sees an approach or presumption, especially toward people from certain countries, that it's too easy for people from these countries to get phony documents, and it's too easy to.... They tend to be mistrusted from the get-go. So there isn't a positive approach.

All these changes could bring an honest savings, because you could deal with cases much more efficiently and much more humanely, and leave time for the genuinely difficult and complex cases.

**Mr. David Siner:** It is a well-known fact that since 2003 there has been a moratorium on parental sponsorship. So first of all, lift this moratorium; don't give us false announcements, but lift the moratorium and clear the 100,000 backlog. Then, if you want to treat the rest of it, the 18,000 or 20,000 a year, that sounds good—but first clear the backlog.

Thank you very much.

•(1645)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Monsieur Telegdi, we have a little bit of time.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

You know, on that issue of increased intake on parents, it was a fair amount of work on the part of this committee to push it. We can make recommendations; unfortunately, we don't make decisions. We make recommendations, then we stay on them and push them.

I think the multiple-entry visa is a huge plus. Before, it was crazy, because if you applied, then it said you couldn't go. It was totally insane, you know, to say that you want to be with your family, and as soon as you made that statement to Immigration Canada, it said you couldn't go and visit. This is a totally new mindset, and it's the one that needed to be changed, because last year we turned down 151,000 visa applications. In 1997-98, we turned down 70,000. So this is a most welcome announcement.

I think what the department will also find is that if parents can come here and check it out, they might not like it. But it doesn't make any sense to all of a sudden be sentenced to never being able to visit your kids because you've said that you wanted to see your kids. This committee has been kicking away at this.

The other one is on the income, and I really agree with you on it. I have been working on a case of a woman who cannot sponsor the man who is the father of her children and her common-law husband because she is on social assistance—and they have four kids. So until he gets back here to get a job, she's going to be on social assistance. We've got to think outside of the rules and regs as they are set down and try to think about some of the future things.

The moratorium is a huge problem. I agree with you. We have too many people who are in limbo. People cannot go to school. They can't get student loans. Their lives are on hold, and this is another thing we have to really cut through.

In terms of the regularization, you know I'm hoping we will spend a lot more time on it. What I would like to know from you, Mr. Kumar, is, to the best of your knowledge—nobody's got the numbers, everybody's guessing—how many people are we talking about?

**Mr. Sanjiv Kumar:** I think it's more than 100,000.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** More than 100,000—I dare say it's probably more than that. Is that just the Indo-Canadian community?

**Mr. Richard Goldman:** That's just the people in this room.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Sanjiv Kumar:** No, no, I am talking about—

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** No, I really think it's a much bigger problem. The Americans have—I don't know what they were saying—25 million to 30 million undocumented people they want to regularize.

I think many of our construction jobs, and all sorts of other jobs, in this country are done by non-status people, and if we could realistically get them out of the country tomorrow, the economy would take a huge hit.

**Mr. Sanjiv Kumar:** That's right.

•(1650)

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** One of the challenges we have—and I think this is an important challenge—is that if we're going to be able to regularize them, we're going to also have to come up with a credible plan of cutting down on the number of applications for refugee status, which is very difficult. Otherwise people will say, well, if you get to Canada, eventually you'll get regularized.

I made this argument to the department, and a lot of people in the country buy into it, as well as some people whose presentations we heard earlier on in regard to people jumping the queue.

**Mr. Sanjiv Kumar:** Well, I would have to say something in this context. Already the immigration department has spent a fortune to interdict people so that they cannot enter, and if we go to the statistics, we find there's a sharp decrease in the people who are coming here and claiming refugee status.

So in that context, the problem can be solved, in one sense, as Immigration is very strict and people are not being let in—though that's a different issue, what we think about that. But at least as far as the regularization of people is concerned, these people who are living here illegally are working; that's why they're surviving. That's very important. So we are not going to create anything for them; we are to just bring them into the mainstream, and they will create things for us for our other plans.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** I don't disagree with that, because as I said, it would really hurt the economy if those people were gone tomorrow. We're going to have to look very seriously at the whole system, because what happened with the Singh case has really cast a huge shadow over everything that's done under the system. Now *The Globe and Mail* has a whole article, and I think we have to rationalize this.

**Mr. Sanjiv Kumar:** I think we provided a lot of input to the *The Globe and Mail* to get all the information from India and everywhere for all this. You see, basically the issue is that for 16 or 17 years you keep a man here and then you tell him to get lost. If we think somebody's not required here, we should have an efficient system to make decisions so that if he's to leave, he leaves in six months; one year is okay if he has family ties, if he has all the ties.

After 16 years I had only one concern about that gentleman. I never said he's a good man, or this, this, this. I talked to everybody, and to many members of this committee also. The concern is that he has stayed here for 16 to 17 years. His wife's grave is here, his children are here, and now we are kicking him out. No doubt he has done many wrong things, but the question is that we should have a system to rationalize this.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** This committee expressed our concern about it. We had a minister who was gone within a day because the system was so bad. So that's what I'm saying, underlining it—

**Mr. Sanjiv Kumar:** Perhaps I can just mention how the system is in shambles. Just a day back, I got a fax from IRB—one of the persons who is sitting here—about him. There is research done by an IRB commissioner—I don't need to name the person, but she did some research exactly on the issues that are not related to his case. I have got the fax and the issues here.

So people don't study things properly. People don't go through things properly, and because of that, many people are suffering here. We requested the IRB to have a new hearing on the whole issue, and they have granted it on the 27th. I request that the members of the standing committee be present and see how things work there, how the decisions are done there. That will be good knowledge for everybody.

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Mr. Goldman, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Richard Goldman:** I don't think we want to get too bogged down in an individual case. I just want to say, Mr. Telegdi, if you're worried about Canada having a credible program for reducing the number of refugee claimants, I think the government is one step ahead of you on this, because as Mr. Kumar was saying, there's been a sharp decrease. In 2001 we had something like 42,000 claimants. We were down to about 25,000 last year, and with the safe third country agreement with the United States, we're looking at another reduction of 5,000 to 6,000.

I think more and more we are viewing refugees in Canada as people we need to be protected from, rather than as people who need our protection. This is one of our big concerns. Here the safe third country agreement will have an enormous impact on people like Colombians, who can never get to Canada now, and who will be refused in the United States and returned to Colombia.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** I'm not sure about the policy. When we have legitimate refugees who get into the country, we try to stop them from getting here. I do have concerns that people from real refugee-producing countries are unable to get here. We have all sorts of concerns with the safe third country agreement and we're going to be reviewing it, I guess, in June or July. They're supposed to be giving a report in six months, so it should be the end of June. Anyway, we have great concerns about it.

That's the problem. I mean, we do that. As soon as we get some legitimate refugees from someplace, bang—the whistle goes off.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Siksay, do you have anything to add?

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Sure. I have another question.

Have we got time for that?

• (1655)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** You have three or four minutes. Then we will adjourn.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Some folks have mentioned the visitor visa and the financial requirements. You probably know there's a private member's bill before the committee to consider posting bonds in the case of visitor visas. I'm just wondering if any folks on the committee have a position on that, whether that's an appropriate thing to do—a goad in an appropriate direction. Do you have any feedback for us about that particular proposal?

**Mr. Sanjiv Kumar:** The bill was presented by Gurmant Grewal. We think it is a very difficult question in the sense that if we see the benefit of it, many people can legitimately meet their family members. On the other hand, if we analyze it, again, it shows that it somehow favours the rich. That inequality is a very important issue. We think it should be rationalized in the sense that there should be ways for legitimate people to come here.

I would mention that I wrote to many members of this committee in the last few days about the case of Madam Paramjit Kaur Khalra. She was the wife of an internationally known human rights activist who was murdered. Thousands of people are going to honour her on Sunday in Toronto. More than 20,000 people are going to be there.

She was invited to speak, but she was refused a visa on the grounds that she doesn't have money in her bank account. She's a human rights activist whose husband had found the details of 25,000 people dead. Ultimately, we had to pursue this with the various members of Parliament. Only yesterday we got a minister's permit for her, and she will be here.

Many people work for that day and night. How many legitimate people are refused visas every day? Money should not be a consideration when granting a visa, and other legitimate reasons should be analyzed.

Many times they are refused visas because of lack of sufficient funds. Philosophers are not rich, so you can't give visas to the philosophers. Professors and teachers in South Asian countries are not rich, so you can't grant them visas. But you will give a visa to a criminal who has lots of money collected through various illegal means. When he shows you that he has enough funds, you say that he can come here. When another person, who is a good man, doesn't have any way to get money legally, you say that he cannot come here.

Inderjeet Singh said that he wanted to add something on the issue of—

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** I'm sorry. Could we hear from other people on visitor visas, before we hear from him?

Are there any further comments?

**Ms. Rivka Augenfeld:** Again, it seems to me that it's presented as a quick fix, but it creates more problems and, again, different classes of people. I think it would create a situation where immigration officers would simply go for that solution as opposed to looking at the cases and using positive discretion to give visas.

We see far too many cases of people who are treated as potential abusers when there is really no good reason to believe that. It's almost impossible to bring over parents from certain countries, and there is no good reason for that. Why should we suddenly impose financial constraints on people who only want to visit with their families?

There is too much potential for abuse, and I think it would end up being very discriminatory.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you very much.

We have about 30 seconds left. Yes, Mr. Telegdi.

[*English*]

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** I think one thing that's important in the whole process is that this was going to be once they are turned down, because then people have no way of getting here. It would be similar to the system that we have in the courts, where people can put up bonds. There are a lot of people who aren't in custody at any one time, because poor people put up bonds.

You could take those figures and do a quality comparison with the visa officers. If the officers turn them down, and then they come here and succeed, you have the numbers to show that the officers are turning down too many people. So it was just for those people who were not going to be let in because they were turned down.

**Ms. Rivka Augenfeld:** I think another point would be that too many people are turned down for no good reason.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** I agree.

**Ms. Rivka Augenfeld:** You're not dealing then with the issue of why they are being turned down in the first place, and looking at the systemic reasons and systemic problems of refusals, which are based on nothing but a prejudicial consideration. Our concern is to deal with the problem at its core, looking at the basis on which people should be accepted for visitor visas or refused. It's too easy to look at it from the end.

● (1700)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Madam Chair, Mr. Kumar's associate had something to add.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** All right.

[*English*]

**Mr. Inderjeet Singh (Human Rights Action Committee):** A few days back, the Honourable Joe Volpe declared that 30,000 drivers were required in Canada immediately. Most of our community people are driving trucks, have their own vehicles, their own trucks, and they are not getting the jobs just for themselves. They are giving employment to other people also. Most of them have two, three, or four trucks—fleet owners—and they're providing jobs to more people. They are facing deportation. So on the one hand, we require drivers, and on the other hand, we are deporting the drivers from here who are already doing business very well in Canada.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille):** Thank you.

I wish to thank you very much for your contribution to the work of this committee.

I will quickly respond to Sanjiv. I do not think the minister will turn a deaf ear to the work and recommendations of the committee. As a matter of fact, our good friend who is behind us is transmitting our recommendations to the minister in simultaneous mode. Announcements were made recently, and I think the committee deserves part of the credit for that, as you do, for having debated highly valuable recommendations.

I am always cautious when there are announcements. In the past, certain announcements were never followed by action. In this regard, I would urge you to be cautious and very objective when things are done. In practice, we start to realize that there are a lot of exceptions.

As you said, with regard to grandparents and parents, the fact that there is a backlog has to be taken into account. When a new person arrives and wants to file an application, we must not give them false hope that this will be processed quickly when we know that there is a processing backlog.

However, things are on the right track and attempts are being made to find measures to improve the system. The minister promised us that he would review the system as a whole and ensure that we have a fair and equitable immigration system. I think all of us here on the committee are on the same wavelength when it comes to this. We are going to stand firm. The report that will be tabled will reflect our opinions. Together, we will join forces to settle this matter once and for all. We have to move in the right direction to improve the immigration system. That brings to an end our day here in Montreal.

The committee will continue its tour next Tuesday, in Halifax, more specifically at the Dartmouth Sportsplex. We invite you to follow the committee's deliberations. We will be in the province of Quebec again next Wednesday, in Quebec City. Then we will conclude with a few more witnesses in Ottawa. Follow our reports. All those who contributed to our work can gain access to reports. They will be available as soon as possible on the website of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. I therefore invite you to consult it regularly.

Those are not the only topics we will be dealing with. We are travelling throughout Canada, but we deal with certain subjects on a

weekly basis. You can look up which topics are coming up: among others, the issue of normalizing the situation of persons without status, newsworthy issues regarding stateless persons, and other subjects. You can also consult the list of the committee's priorities. Insofar as possible, we have tried to follow the recommendations and opinions of people we heard. We invite you to consult the site periodically. We are very active.

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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