



House of Commons  
CANADA

# **Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration**

---

CIMM • NUMBER 077 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

---

**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, November 15, 2005**

—  
**Chair**

**The Honourable Andrew Telegdi**

All parliamentary publications are available on the  
``Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire'' at the following address:

**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Tuesday, November 15, 2005

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.)):** I call the committee meeting to order.

We have a number of notices of motion. I have before me the motion by Hedy Fry and I have the motion by Mr. Jaffer, and then I have another motion by Ms. Fry.

I would propose that we deal with the motion by Ms. Fry pertaining to the estimates first. If we deal with that, it makes Mr. Jaffer's motion redundant, if you will, but it accomplishes the same kind of thing. Then, my understanding is, if we pass that motion we will get the minister to come in and will continue to deal with questions related to the estimates. I hope we can wrap it up, maybe in an hour, once that happens. But we'll see how that goes.

I wonder whether somebody could give me a motion on—

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Mr. Chair—man, I'm prepared to move the motion of which notice was given by Ms. Fry. I'll move it.

But having said that, it's my view that Mr. Jaffer's motion isn't completely redundant here, that Mr. Jaffer's intent was to have the minister here. The fact is that the minister is waiting for some signal from the committee that they're ready to have him come in.

By adopting Ms. Fry's motion, we would be rescinding a previous resolution of the committee, and the committee would then reconsider the supplementary estimates, as was originally procedurally intended. Then Mr. Jaffer may or may not wish to move a motion that would have the minister appear right now, and that would be okay as well.

I'll move Ms. Fry's motion to get us three-quarters of the way there. If Mr. Jaffer wishes to move a motion to have the minister come in, that would be acceptable to me.

Is it acceptable to you? Are you okay with that?

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC):** Just one moment; we'll know in just a second. We're just consulting with our critic here.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Chair—man, I think the difficulty is that we don't have some of the material we want to have in front of us to question the minister, because this wasn't expected. I don't know whether the clerks could supply it. We'd need copies of the estimates and copies of the statement the minister made to the committee two weeks ago. If those are available, then we could probably work from those.

I guess I'm asking.

• (1540)

**The Chair:** Mr. Dolin.

**Mr. Benjamin Dolin (Committee Researcher):** There is a briefing note from the original meeting on November 1. It's available to be recirculated. It includes, as an appendix, the estimates.

As for Mr. Volpe's opening statement from last time, no, I don't believe we have that.

**The Chair:** Is there any further discussion?

Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** I'm not clear what the motion is, Mr. Chair. You'll have to explain what's happened.

**The Chair:** You don't have the motion in front of you? Essentially what it does is rescind the previous motion.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Has it been amended, though, with Mr. Jaffer's consent? That's what I'm not clear about.

**The Chair:** Yes, they're fine with it.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** I'd be fine if the rest of the committee feels it's something we could deal with right now, bringing the minister forward; I would amend it in that fashion.

**The Chair:** We're trying to get the process so that we can have the minister come in. Then we can vote on the estimates again.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** I understand that, Mr. Chair, but I didn't hear whether Mr. Jaffer was amending Ms. Fry's motion.

**The Chair:** No.

**Hon. David Anderson (Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, to confirm, this motion is to rescind the decision we took previously with respect to these estimates, is it?

**The Chair:** That is correct.

**Hon. David Anderson:** Okay. That's all we have to worry about; it has not been amended.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Now do you want to move a motion, Mr. Jaffer, that we ask the minister to come in?

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Sure. I think my original motion had something to that effect, so if we just take the parts that call on the minister to come at his earliest convenience, that is what I would move at this point.

**The Chair:** Great. So essentially, we pass this motion and then we invite the minister in.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Could somebody call in the minister?

Mr. Jaffer.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Is there anything we could do to actually make it this easy to get a minister in front of the committee on a normal basis? This is quite a treat.

**The Chair:** Mr. Jaffer, just the notice you gave that you wanted him here.... It shows how seriously your request was taken.

Are we waiting for the knocking of the Black Rod?

Welcome, Minister Volpe and Madame Charette.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** It's a pleasure to be here, Mr. Chair, colleagues.

**The Chair:** In terms of how we proceed, I think we can go back, since we can in a way look at this as further information gathering so that we get to deal with the estimates. We could do it by resuming the five-minute rounds of questioning. That way, hopefully we'll be able to deal with this in the next hour or so.

Let me ask Madam Ablonczy.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Minister, for making yourself available—unexpectedly. It's an unexpected pleasure. We need, as you know, more information before we can approve the estimates. The Conservative Party believes we need to significantly increase spending in the immigration portfolio, spending that has been frozen since 1996, but we're not prepared to do it without knowing that there is a plan to actually deliver value to newcomers and to immigrants.

So I'd like to go right to the question of parents and grandparents, because you have mentioned it a couple of times in the last two weeks since we last met. My question is the following.

Would you please advise the committee which sections of the supplementary estimates pertain to processing of parents and grandparents and also explain why money is needed, why simply increasing the quota for processing this category of applications would not allow the normal processing to put more emphasis on this category of applications? As you know, many people are concerned about parents and grandparents, since this committee was told less than a year ago that in fact your department had secretly shut down the program and quit processing parents and grandparents. This caused a lot of concern.

My question is, why not just put more emphasis on it in the normal process? If that doesn't work, tell us where we can be certain that moneys will be spent as needed.

• (1545)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Thank you, Madam Ablonczy, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to come to address specific questions with respect to the estimates.

Let me, before I answer Madame's question, thank you for the decision that I understand you've just taken. It's a very productive step forward for us to move ahead on a file in which I think we all share some great interest.

Madam Ablonczy, you have before you the estimates with the explanation of the requirements. What's the page number they would have?

You have a copy there with you, have you not?

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** [Inaudible—Editor] ...is the one I'm looking at, Minister.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** In the voted appropriations, you'll find in that very first item the reference you're looking for, the "Funding to reduce the backlog of immigration and citizenship applications and to support a program for international students to work off campus" and for parents and grandparents.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Yes, I see that. That's a total of \$54,000?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** No, it's \$54 million.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Yes, sorry, it's \$54 million.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Just so you get precise information as you go through, I made reference to the fact that this year, as a result of the infusion of those moneys, we've issued over 10,000 visas and we have approved in principle some 19,000 persons in this category. As of October 17, about 6,500 parents and grandparents were already landed under the program.

You'll recall that in the announcements I made in April we were looking to triple that number and we were infusing resources in order to achieve that particular objective. We were hoping to be able to do that by the end of the fiscal year, but this is where you see the moneys, in that very first line.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Could I just ask for clarification? The \$54 million is for the backlog in total, and of course, we know there are over 700, 000 people in the backlog of applications. I want you to speak specifically about parents and grandparents and where that fits into this picture and why you need more money instead of just putting more emphasis on that segment of applications.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** I'm going to ask the deputy to break it down—I have a sheet here that breaks it all down for you—and then give you a very specific reason as to why, operationally, you'd have to spend more money there.

Madame.

**Ms. Janice Charette (Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** As you know, Madame Ablonczy, at the beginning of the year the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tables an annual report to Parliament that sets out what our targets are in terms of immigration processing for the year. The report would have been tabled in November 2004. Then Minister Sgro tabled an annual report that showed we would process approximately 6,000 applications in the parents and grandparents category.

Under Minister Volpe's leadership, there was a decision made that this was not sufficient, given the pressures that exist in that particular category, which you've heard lots about in this committee. So the decision was made to increase that, as the minister said, to triple the number of applications that would be processed against parents and grandparents.

So the \$54.2 million that's in the supplementary estimates contains, for parents and grandparents specifically, a total amount of \$30.4 million, which has two components in it. You'll see in the table that there's vote 1 and vote 5.

Vote 1 is salary and operating and maintenance dollars within the department. A total of \$18 million of that \$30.4 million will be coming to Citizenship and Immigration Canada for the processing of those applications.

The moneys that are considered vote 5 are contributions to organizations outside of the department. That's \$12.4 million, which is completely related to the parents and grandparents item, which will be funds that we've transferred to service-providing organizations for integration and settlement services associated with that higher level of parents and grandparents landing in the year.

● (1550)

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Are you saying you're going to hire additional staff to work on this category?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** In terms of operating and maintenance costs within the department, we have looked at a combination of temporary duty officers and overtime officers so far, to be able to try to increase the processing. The funding we have right now is for two years, so we won't hire permanent, ongoing staff. We are looking at how to make arrangements to increase that processing level within the department, which calls on a range of options, but no, we will not be hiring permanent staff against that.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** So why the money for staff?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** It's not just salaries; it's operating and maintenance dollars as well. So it's a combination of overtime, temporary duty, term and casual staff, but it won't be permanent staff.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** I understand that, but you are hiring additional people.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** Yes.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** How many are you hiring?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** Subsequent to the approval of the supplementary estimates by this committee, we will be able to engage staff related to this item. A combination of individuals will be hired in the call centre, as well as in some of our other processing centres. I don't actually have the breakdown by centre with me.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** How will the call centre help process applications?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** All of the aspects of our operations are involved in processing applications. Once we indicated that we wanted to increase the number, it increased the amount of calls related to parents and grandparents that were coming into the call centre.

So they're not actually directly related to the processing, as you said. I don't have the numbers with me, actually, that show explicitly the parents and grandparents category related to staffing. I can get back to you with those numbers.

**The Chair:** Okay. We'll end there. It ran over.

Mr. Anderson.

**Hon. David Anderson:** Minister, when you were last before us about a month ago, I asked you a question on the training of young aboriginals, particularly in western cities, who are largely jobless and without training. Rather than relying on immigrants as our first line of opportunity for filling jobs around Canada, I wonder if you have had a chance to talk to the Minister of Human Resources as to what we can do to make sure young first nations Canadians are not once again—it's been innumerable times in the last 450 years—bypassed, while we look overseas for people to come and fill skilled jobs.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** The short answer to your question is yes, I did. We've had ongoing policy discussions in our cabinet in order to address precisely this issue. Probably you would have seen the outcome of some of those discussions in yesterday's economic update, and the resources and policy energy associated with doing precisely what you're talking about.

Mr. Anderson, you will know we have two basic programs that address the development of skills in the aboriginal community. First are the AHRDA agreements—aboriginal human resource development agreements—that are discharged through aboriginal organizations and agencies. Some of them are specific to reserve, some are with bands, and of course some are with larger provincial and national bodies.

The second group is the ASEP group, the aboriginal special skills program. Some of those resources are being used for projects that are really project specific. For example, we currently have a great demand for human resources in some of the projects being developed in the north—in the mining and diamond industries—and some as well in northern Ontario. I cite those as two of many examples where companies and projects that are skill specific engage the aboriginal agencies and bands in the ongoing development of skills that are required for the discharge of that specific project as a condition before they can even bring in workers from other places.

The unfortunate fact of the matter is that sometimes this runs counter to the band members' own decisions to stay on site. So we have a different challenge.

My colleague in Human Resources and Skills Development was able to get some moneys in order to ensure that what we could do is not only build skills capability on reserves, but also attract small and medium-sized businesses to take advantage of those skills. The moneys there are substantial. In the ASEP program, I think it's about—and I stand to be corrected—\$200 million a year. In the AHRDA agreements, it's substantially more.

● (1555)

**Hon. David Anderson:** Time is short. I'm sure the chairman will too soon cut me off.

But I'd like to have a clear statement that in a government where sometimes priorities are in many directions you have a clear priority between yourself, the Minister of Human Resources, and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development that in filling new job opportunities in Canada, *the* priority is making sure first nations youth are trained, before we turn to filling such jobs through immigration.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** I think I can give you that understanding quite unequivocally.

**Hon. David Anderson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Anderson. You came in under time, so you're giving us a good example.

Mr. Clavet.

[Translation]

**Mr. Roger Clavet (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister for coming to provide explanations on these appropriations. I appreciate that he made himself available.

In the supplementary estimates (A) 2005-06, under vote 1, we have an amount of 41 million dollars to reduce the backlog of immigration applications and to support a program which is very close to my heart and which he supports as well I believe, the program that allows international students to work off campus. So I believe we are really of the same mind in this respect.

An additional amount of 12 million dollars is being requested. I do not really understand why we need this additional funding just to allow international students to work off campus. It would be interesting to find out why additional funding is required just to allow international students to work off campus, as has been requested by many communities, including mine, where there is a large population of foreign students at Laval University, for example.

So I would like to hear the minister's explanation on this.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Thank you, Mr. Clavet. The answer is quite simple.

This is funding that we allocate to provinces in order to facilitate the integration of international students in colleges and universities of that province. This is why I require a memorandum of understanding with each of the provinces. We finally signed an agreement with Quebec two weeks ago, but we have not yet reached full agreement with the other provinces.

In order to provide this program in each of the provinces, it will cost us this amount, for this year only, which will be turned over to the provincial governments.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Those negotiations in Quebec which you mentioned, were they only with the government of Quebec or only with some of the universities in Quebec? You say you reached an agreement two weeks ago. I checked less than a week ago and they seemed to say that nothing had yet been signed and that negotiations were still going on. There are people waiting for this. International students at Laval University and other institutions say that the principle has been accepted, but have you yet signed an agreement with Quebec?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Allow me to clarify. We have reached agreement in principle, but the official signing has not yet been completed. We hoped to reach this stage a few weeks ago because we wanted to have something to announce at the conference of provincial and territorial ministers a week and a half ago. However, we have not yet reached agreement with all provinces.

• (1600)

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Can the minister confirm today that the agreement with Quebec is well under way and will be signed?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Absolutely. Quebec was the first province to come to the table to reach an agreement. Somebody just whispered into my ear that it was the second, but for me it was the first. When I met the minister, my counterpart, the first things she said was that she wanted this program. So, formally, Quebec might be the second province, but informally, as far as I am concerned, she was the first.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Therefore I will be able to state during the election campaign that international students will be able to work off campus. It will be a done fact by then, we have the minister's commitment.

I would have a supplementary question, if I may, regarding the National Immigration Portal. The Department is asking for 7.5 million dollars to maintain this portal. I wonder if this work is done internally or if you hired a private company to maintain the National Immigration Portal. Did you call for tenders from private companies for the maintenance of this portal which allows applications to immigrate to Canada to be made on the Web.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Like in all other things, Mr. Clavet, we need first of all authority to spend the money. For example, regarding international students, we would like to act immediately, but the funding must be approved first. Without funds, we cannot do anything. The same thing goes with this portal.

We have done all the preliminary work in-house. If we need wider coordination with provinces or other partners who would like to be part of this project, we will call on Public Works and Government Services Canada.

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

[English]

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

Mr. Temelkovski.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Minister, for coming back to us in such a brief time.

In regard to the interim federal health insurance, the last time you were here—I believe it was in the spring—we discussed the issue of maybe insurance for the refugees and new immigrants who do need to have the coverage. Do you have an update on that issue? I see there's a request for further funding that program.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Temelkovski, you'll recall that when you asked me that question, I asked you in response, how much do you think it would cost? You gave me a figure almost immediately.

When we went back to the department I said, how come a member—having due regard to the fact that this is your area of expertise, the insurance business—can give me a number like this? Why are we spending so much money in this package? Isn't there a way we can distribute the moneys differently? If this is a resource that's going just for providing that insurance, can we not go into the private domain and ask for a quote? Can we not buy the insurance rather than provide it ourselves?

We did. We've gone to a consulting group that's giving us an assessment of not only how much it would cost us, but how we would administer it and how we would best be able to discharge those funds. So we're on the way.

• (1605)

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Okay.

In regard to the additional funds you're looking for, is that an interim need of additional funds for the health...?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Yes. That's all we're asking for.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** Every year in the main estimates we ask for a certain base amount, which in this case, for this program, has a base reference level of \$32.7 million. As we go through the year, depending on the volumes we're dealing with, we'll come back to this committee and ask for additional funding.

As members of this committee will know, we've come back every year for some years and asked for additional funding related to volumes. I'm glad to tell you that the amount at least is going down, but we're asking for additional funds to cover off the volumes, which were higher than anticipated, as part of the base. We are hoping to actually be able to address this issue on an ongoing basis, so we won't have to keep coming back in supplementary estimates, as we can actually adjust the actual base for the program.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Good.

Perhaps we could now switch into the Ontario agreement. I see on page 156, regarding the Ontario immigration agreement, you're asking for an additional \$23,949,000. Is this money going to be used per person, spread over the total number of people who enter Ontario, or is it for a specific program, such as enhancing ESL or such programs?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** We don't really have that money just yet, as you know. This is part of a beginning for stabilizing some of the funding relative to the numbers of people we were getting into Ontario that we were not getting anywhere else.

As you know, since then the Premier of the Province of Ontario and the Prime Minister have had discussions that led to a series of negotiations that essentially said we are going to increase the amount of moneys that go towards integration and settlement, some of it having to do with language training, some of it having to do with other acculturation processes, and some of it having to do with training—a variety of things. They came up with an agreement in principle that my officials then continued to fine-tune. They were prepared to sign on, I guess, about a week and a half ago, almost two weeks ago. We did not sign it. I'm happy to say we're closer to signing it today than we were then.

No, these are moneys that would have gone to meet the needs of immigrants as they went into some of our partner agencies.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** It is not per person, like increasing it from \$3,000 to \$4,000, or from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** No, it is program specific.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Thank you.

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

Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your return engagement so soon.

Minister, I wonder if you can tell me the difference between the line "Funding to support the improvement of service delivery to clients," the \$9,630,000, and the first line there, of funding to reduce the backlog.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** I'm going to ask Janice to give you that response.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** The funding to reduce backlog of immigration and citizenship applications is related to an announcement that the minister made in April, which has three specific components. It's about reducing the processing time for citizenships, for both proofs and grants as well as parents and grandparents, and to introduce the student measures.

The second item is linked to an announcement that was contained in budget 2005. The Minister of Finance announced there would be an investment of \$50 million over five years to improve client service—seed investments toward modernizing and improving client service within the department. So the latter item, which is funding to support the improvement of service delivery to clients—\$9.63 million—is related to that. We're using that for a variety of initiatives within the department. We're using it, for example, to increase the number of staff at our call centres, so that we're able to actually respond to more calls.

I'm happy to tell you that we're actually already increasing the call response rate at the call centre, which is open from seven o'clock in the morning to seven o'clock at night. We have a better response rate, which I'm hoping eventually will start to reduce some of the pressures in other areas when people can't get answers from us.

We are putting additional staff into CPC Vegreville to be able to deal with the slow turnaround times, in terms of the extension of work permits and other processing that's done in CPC Vegreville.

We are improving our online tools so that individuals who want to check on the status of applications will be able to get better information online.

Our intention would be, over time, to actually put client service coordinators and client service reps into some of our higher-volume posts abroad, as well as some of our posts here in Canada, to be able to give service around some of the exceptional cases, where they may be more complicated, and to be able to improve service to members of Parliament as well.

We're hoping to be able to make some investment in terms of really creating a better platform going forward for client service, but that's what the funding for this year is about.

• (1610)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Is the \$9 million in addition to what the Minister of Finance announced, or is it part of that \$50 million?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** Basically with regard to the announcement in the budget, this is actually the funding, the appropriation necessary, to give life to what the minister announced in the budget. So for the \$50 million over five years, this is the first instalment, and then next year in the mains you'll see the amounts afterwards.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** All right. Do you have the numbers about how many new staff you're hiring in the call centre in Vegreville? I know you might not know that.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** I have staffing intentions. I'd like to actually go back and check my numbers before I give them to the committee, as I said to Madam Ablonczy.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** No problem.

Can I come to the line, "Funding for Initiatives to Prevent Racism"? I notice there's \$887,000 in the department and \$2 million outside of the department. I wonder if you can explain what that's going to in the department and what it goes to outside of the department. What's that money for?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** As you're aware, Mr. Siksay, the federal government has an initiative to combat racism. This department is a partner of that overall plan. There are several departments associated with it—Heritage, Human Resources, Justice, even CBSA I believe, Multiculturalism—and we are all partners in it. This is our component of that partnership.

With respect to the programs that come forward, some of them are proactive, some of them are educational. When I say proactive, I mean that it falls in the range not of simply saying racism is bad, but teaching what values Canadians hold dear, including of course the concept of the value of diversity and inclusion.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Specifically, though, in your department, can you tell me about a specific program that it goes to? Is it in the citizenship area? Is it in the immigration area? Does it deal with, say, employers dealing with international credentials and some of the issues that we've seen there, which I think some of the witnesses who came before the committee identified as issues of racism? I'm just wondering what kind of specific things that would involve.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Specifically, the host program—the host program is the one that we fund—and the ISAP program are two programs that are ongoing and give us the opportunity to address the issue of racism.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** Particularly focused on youth. Newcomer youth is the focus of this particular programming.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** The ISAP program.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** Of the additional moneys. As the minister said, the host and ISAP programs we've done add a component to focus particularly around racism and respect for diversity issues, focused on newcomer youth and in the schools.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Lee.

**Mr. Derek Lee:** Thank you.

Mr. Minister, I want to ask about what our research staff has described as the global case management system. This is a newly developed system to improve management of files, cases, through the department and to facilitate sharing with the CBSA. I always get nervous these days when government embarks on developing a new system, because we're not always sure where it ends. With the best of intentions you head down the road, and you sometimes find, when you get halfway down the road, that you've got to reshape the project and toss out some of the work that's been done.

Can you tell us where that's at now, how it's coming along, if you're on target, and whether the \$5 million to \$10 million that's been invested in that is still being well spent?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** I can assure you that the money is being well spent—I can see a chuckle there, from my colleague from Brampton—but I also think it's right to acknowledge some of the truth in what you say, that when you embark on some of these programs you find that things are re-dimensioned because of some of the complexities that develop and that probably were not foreseen. I think we're re-scoping some of the issues. I've gone to see the global case management program and the system as it operates in Sydney. We're moving from a pencil-and-paper type of department into one that...and I guess this is true of all government agencies and departments.

So there's going to be an adjustment process, but I'm confident this is going to end up exactly where we want it, providing for greater efficiency and more speedy delivery of service.

● (1615)

**Mr. Derek Lee:** Thinking back to an earlier year, when government began the task of developing the gun registry, the leadership on that was provided by the Department of Justice. Looking back on it now, maybe the Department of Justice wasn't the right place to look for leadership on generating a management tool, although maybe legal tools.

Can you assure us that your department has more than sufficient expertise to undertake and complete this project? Or perhaps you're already looking outside the department for management on this project.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** I think I can have the deputy answer this, but the fact of the matter is that there is a combination of both. When you and I were in opposition, Mr. Lee, the government departments of the day weren't online. Most of them didn't have any way of transferring information to each other except by carrying a piece of paper from one office to another building. A lot of the processes were novel, quite new. You'll recall that the concept of the Internet, which we today take for granted, as late as 1992 or 1993 was still fairly innovative.

So we have developed our own expertise. That typically means that we have a better understanding of exactly what it is we want the technology to perform. We are sufficiently well equipped to be able to critique the kind of feedback we get from those who develop that technology for us.



Do we engage outside experts in helping us understand what we're doing a little bit better? Yes. In building the architecture and the engineering associated with the program, it doesn't matter what the input is; what matters is the engineering and the architecture. For that we go outside, and we have ongoing outside critique of how we're developing the program. I think we've achieved a fairly good balance.

Now, the deputy might want to make that a little bit more precise. I wouldn't say all of the bugs are out of the system—but maybe I'm being too critical of my own department.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** Well, we are still in the journey.

As the minister said, the first deployment, which was in the citizenship stream, was a challenge for the department, as the committee has probably heard, and resulted in some slowdowns in our productivity. I think we've made that up now, and we are seeing the real advantages of the new global case management system.

We're now preparing for what will be the next big challenge, the deployment in the immigration business line. Having gone through our lessons learned exercise from citizenship and a re-scoping exercise, we are now planning to bring that online starting in January 2007.

So we're relying on a combination of both inside resources and external resources to be able to supplement that, as the minister said.

**Mr. Derek Lee:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Ms. Ablonczy.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to point out that with respect to the global case management system, when I joined the committee in April 2002 we were told that the system would be operational by the fall of 2002. Here we are in the fall of 2005 and we are still on the journey, having spent many millions of dollars. I don't think that speaks well for how this whole project has been managed.

I want to go back to the parents and grandparents, because that is something that you, Minister, have been making much of. So far I've been able to find out that \$30.4 million supposedly will be spent on processing this category of applications. However, you're unable to tell me, through your deputy minister, exactly how many people are going to be hired. We know no full-time people will be hired. We don't know how many part-time. We don't know how much overtime. We know that part of this is going into the call centre, which clearly is not going to be processing any applications.

Perhaps I can find this out: of the \$168 million being requested in the supplementary estimates, exactly how much is actually going to process the additional 12,000 parents and grandparents that, back in April, you promised would be processed by the end of this year? Exactly how much, and how is it going to deliver those results?

• (1620)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** I think the initial expenditures of dollars and the allocation of personnel would of necessity appear to be imprecise. We don't have this money, so the deputy can't possibly give us a specific number; she's been risk-managing funds and reallocating staff to a particular function in anticipation of moneys that would be allocated.

Now, we have, of that money, \$18 million—unless someone has a different number—that was supposed to be directed to the processing of these applications for the rest of this fiscal year. As you know, that money is not there yet. So when the deputy is unable to give you the answer—

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Just hang on there. What do you mean the money is not going there? You're either planning to spend the money on that or you're not.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** No, no, we are, but I mean, we didn't have the money, as you know, so—

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Let me clarify something, Minister. Regardless of what this committee does, is it not true that your department would receive no money at all until the supplementary estimates are given royal assent, after a vote in both houses of Parliament?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** That's exactly correct.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** So you weren't expecting the money yesterday, or today, correct?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** No, Madam Ablonczy, that's not entirely true.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** But you're asking for the money, so you should be able to tell us how you're going to spend it.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** I can give you the answer. The estimates come forward after the minister of any department goes through a cabinet process to acquire funds or to earmark funds that will then be approved by the House. Given the environment in which we find ourselves, it would have been very imprudent for any department to actually go out and spend moneys that would not have received approval.

The way to implement these programs would be to risk-manage the funds that had already been approved in the budget and to make accommodations accordingly. When the deputy gave you an answer earlier about additional time, reallocating staff, overtime—

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** I'm on a timeline here, so please be brief.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** —that's what she would be indicating. Now we're in a position where, in I guess about two weeks, one would expect that the supplementary estimates would go through both houses. At that time, the department, just like any department, would have authority to spend those moneys and to then work out a much more specific plan. They've been working on risk management, so the resources they've taken from other branches of the department would then come back into play.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** I understand what you're saying, Minister, but bear in mind that you promised in April, and the deputy minister confirmed this, that you were going to process 19,000 parents and grandparents by the end of this year.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** By the end of the fiscal year.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Now you're telling us that you not only made a promise for which you had no funding but you don't even have a plan to do that.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** No, we had to plan for it, and I gave you an indication that—

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** I want the details of the plan, then.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** We have already approved in principle 19,000 for this year. We already have issued 10,700 visas—

• (1625)

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** But how much is going to be spent to process them?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** —and we expect that we'll meet our target by the end of the fiscal year. I gave you an indication that we had targeted \$18 million for that. When you approve the supplementary estimates, you will be approving the expenditure of \$18 million for this particular aspect of those announcements made last April.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** But without a plan.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. You ran over on that one.

The chair is going to take a round and start the clock.

Minister, I agree in total with Mr. Anderson's comments regarding the first nations and the aboriginal population in this country. Obviously we're dealing with citizens, and citizenship gives rights in Canada. We have to make sure the obligations to them are fulfilled.

I'm looking at reducing waiting times and backlogs. There's a question I have, because it just recently came to my attention. We have Canadians who were born abroad but who are Canadian citizens. I have a situation that crossed my desk in the last number of days, and the situation is very simple. The son of a Canadian was born in the United States on January 1, 1978. The gentleman in question is an ordained rabbi. He finds himself in a position of wanting to come back to this country to work, and this person, who is a Canadian citizen, was told that seven months or longer will be needed to process his application.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** What application would that be, Mr. Telegdi?

**The Chair:** Well, the fact that they can end up proving that they're Canadian citizens. They were told they would have to have medical checks, they were told that they'll have to have security clearance, and of course they were told they would have to get social insurance numbers.

While I understand there is a timeframe in cases where people apply, it seems to me that when we're dealing with Canadian citizens, we would want to move very expeditiously to make sure this kind of timeframe of seven months doesn't exist.

So, Minister, I have the letter written up for you and I'm going to give it to you, with the particulars. I certainly hope this is not the norm in terms of the way we deal with Canadian citizens who happen to want to come back to this country to work.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** I don't know how to comment. I guess the answer is yes, we want to reduce processing times for everything. In this instance, it sounds to me like we're talking about an application for a proof of citizenship as opposed to a grant of citizenship.

There is a time lag between the submission of the application and the actual processing of the proof. Right now, we're running at about four and a half months. Clearly that's a long time, but it's not an unreasonable length of time. If we could get to a point at which we can have it live and online, that would be ideal. Unfortunately, we still have to make sure there's an integrity of applications and documents associated with them, and that will take some time.

Seven months is too long. Four and a half is a lot more reasonable. Maybe three would be better.

**The Chair:** It seems to me that when we're dealing with citizenship, Minister, the point I want to make is that if somebody is a citizen, we should have the resources there to process them very quickly. There are charter rights that go with citizenship, and if somebody wants to come back to work in this country, then by all means they're certainly welcome.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** I am in agreement, Mr. Chairman. In fact, we have...well, you'll just find no disagreement.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madame Faillie.

[Translation]

**Ms. Meili Faillie (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ):** Mr. Minister, did you by any chance change your mind regarding the Refugee Appeals Division?

This is an issue of interest to me. In terms of the case management system, you were about to convert the old systems to the new system. It did not look like you were going to ask for additional funding. If my memory is correct, last February we had approved a certain amount of money. Now you are asking for more.

Is this a request for new money, or is it just that you did not spend the money at the beginning of the year and that you have to bring forward a new request for the same dollars?

Secondly, in the supplementary estimates there is a line item for the revitalization of the Toronto waterfront. What is this about?

• (1630)

**Ms. Janice Charette:** If I may, I will answer in English.

[English]

so I can make sure I get this right.

You are right. There were funds in the main estimates associated with the global case management system. This amount of \$5.7 million is an amount that was expended last year, 2004-05, so what we're doing is basically reprofiling it.

[Translation]

They were pushed forward to 2005-06.

[English]

The reasons those funds were not expended in 2004-05 were mainly delays experienced in purchasing hardware related to the project.

As I think I told you the last time we were before you talking about the global case management system, we were in a replanning exercise. As a result, we did put some slowdowns on the project, so the pace of spending against the project didn't quite accord with when the funds were being voted. That's why we're coming back now. Those funds are now being rolled into the project and will be expended in 2005-06 instead.

[Translation]

**Ms. Meili Faillie:** How many person-days does it take to implement the project? How many resources do you need for completion. Do you have a target date?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** Yes, we have a target date. As I said earlier, in answer to a question of Mr. Lee, we anticipate starting the second deployment in January 2007. We will then extend this to our offices abroad. This will take a few months. We will do it one office at a time rather than all offices at the same time. We hope to be done by August 2007. As I mentioned earlier, we are talking here only about the immigration system. We have already implemented the system in the citizenship stream. I will check my figures in order to answer your questions about our expenditures to date and the remaining costs.

**Ms. Meili Faille:** At any rate, you can come back to us with those. I had already requested these figures last time but we never got them.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** I am sorry. I believe I provided those figures. I have them here with me today. I remember you asking me the same question last time.

**Ms. Meili Faille:** Thank you.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** The second part of your question is about the [English]

the Toronto waterfront revitalization initiative.

[Translation]

This is a project that is under my area of responsibility as minister for the City of Toronto. This is funding for a specific project. When I was minister for Human Resources, these funds were administered by the Department of Human Resources. Now that I am in the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, management of these funds was transferred to officials of my new department. This is not funding that belongs to the Department of Human Resources nor that of Citizenship and Immigration but that is intended for a specific project in the City of Toronto that was part of the big project for the Olympics a few years ago.

As I mentioned last time, if you would like additional information I am available to provide a full briefing. Alternately, I can offer the services of Mr. John McWhinnie, who is the official responsible of this file in my department.

**Ms. Meili Faille:** I have a question regarding the lawsuits against the Department. I checked the cases lost by the Department and I know that you are requesting funding for the Multiple Mandamus. When I reviewed the arguments made in those cases, I wondered if this did not open the door to other lawsuits, which is rather scary. If I remember correctly, there was quite a backlog at the time and many cases had the same profile. So when we are talking about 1.7 million dollars today, how much are future cases going to cost? It could be a sizeable amount.

• (1635)

**Ms. Janice Charette:** These are only legal costs, they are not the costs for processing mandamus cases.

**Ms. Meili Faille:** So these are only legal costs, but there could be other cases based on the same arguments. How many applications submitted to the Department fall under...

**Ms. Janice Charette:** We are presently reviewing all applications that might be covered. I cannot guess. I will have to ask my lawyers in order to tell you how many cases are covered by the court decision because we asked people if they wanted to be part of the process or not. This is how we try to limit the size of this project.

**Ms. Meili Faille:** In this regard...

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Faille. You ran way over. Good try.

Mr. Anderson.

**Hon. David Anderson:** If I could, I would return to the subject of alienated youth, Minister, which does concern me greatly. In the last three weeks we've seen on television the events in France, where we have large numbers of immigrant young men and children of immigrants who have been destroying property, beating people, killing, in fact, and burning cars. This is in a country that gave the world the slogan, *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*.

Switching to Canada, we've also seen over the summer, particularly in Toronto, a series of murders both by and involving young people, where the victims have been young people, and again particularly young immigrants or children of immigrants. These are related to crime gangs, again organized on an ethnic basis, sometimes around the origins of the people involved.

Where in these supplementary estimates can you tell us we're going to see expenditures that will deal with this issue of alienated youths—either immigrants themselves or children of immigrants—so that this particular problem can be reduced and these young people become more productive members of society, so that they have better motivation to get education or jobs? Where do we find the specific elements?

Perhaps it's with relation to Ontario, but it seems to me that long before we increase numbers, we should be dealing with the problems we have now.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** You raise an issue that's a lot larger than the supplementary estimates. We've given you an indication of the moneys that we contribute for the anti-racism strategy, of which we are but a small part. There's a much larger component, a whole of government approach. The integration and settlement dollars are in part designed to do this as well.

There has been much talk about the amount of money that goes for integration and settlement. Presumably, for all of those, through the agents we have, through the agencies and our partners—by and large non-governmental organizations and, in some provinces, governmental organizations—the issues of integration, welcoming, acclimatizing, and the development of values that we hold dear for all of our young men and women, irrespective of origin and whether Canadian or not, form a part of the acculturation process that's part of those integration programs. In supplementary estimates, you would have seen those preliminary funds that would have gone to Ontario.

In answer to a prior question, I talked about the amount of money that would be going to nationalizing a new Canada-Ontario accord that was struck by the Prime Minister and the premier of that province, and in which other provincial premiers have expressed an interest. So moneys would go there, but they're not part of the supplementary estimates. You'll see those in the main estimates in the budget to come. What you will be able to find is that little piece, and you'd have to extrapolate from that.

I think you would keep in mind, Mr. Anderson, that when we drew up the supplementary estimates, some of the issues you've referred to were not part of the public psychology. In other words, we hadn't seen an outburst of anti-social behaviour. We haven't seen it here, except for the reference that you indicated. The government has chosen to address that in a much more expeditious fashion, through Justice, through Public Security, through Heritage, and through other transfers to provinces and municipalities, in order to address the issues on a more urgent basis.

Immigration is again a very small part of that. It may be that from the experience of this last summer, we'll develop a larger program that will implicate Immigration Canada. We hope to address these issues at the other end of the process. In part, the expenditures that we have put into the portal are designed to give a greater education on what life would be like here in Canada.

Secondly, with the integration and settlement dollars that we currently employ and that we hope to augment—you'll see these in the main estimates—what we would like to do is establish the flexibility of how those moneys are implemented. For example, typically it takes about three months from the issuance of a permit to land here, to when a landing does take place. I've asked the department to start thinking in terms of establishing programs and projects—maybe we'd have to start on pilot projects—whereby we would begin the integration process abroad. That way, when people come here, the first person they see isn't going to be the one who's going to tell them how to take a cab, or how to take a taxi, or how to take a streetcar to go someplace. They will already understand what's here from an acculturation process, a language process, and an acclimatization process.

• (1640)

Whether all of that will work or not, I don't know. But you will also not see in here moneys transferred to provinces for the purposes of educating younger people. That's not part of the mandate of Citizenship and Immigration. That's not our jurisdiction. Once the moneys have gone into an educational process that sees young men and women in a structured environment, then we have to have confidence that the jurisdiction that's responsible for that structured environment delivers on the commonly held objectives and values of all Canadians.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister. We have run over the hour by quite a few minutes.

I'm wondering if the committee would feel ready to vote on the estimates, because we're going to have a 5:15 bell for a vote at 5:30, and we want to deal with something on Bill C-283, as to what direction we want to go.

Madame Faillie

**Ms. Meili Faillie:** Can I just ask one little question? It's really, really little.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** We have a couple of members with questions too, Mr. Chairman, and we have half an hour or so.

**The Chair:** What I'm worried about is that we have Bill C-283 that we were going to deal with.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Well, obviously we're not going to get to that.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Well, I have to leave. I think my officials are prepared to stay to address any further questions you might have with respect to the estimates. Whatever you do with the rest of your time is, of course, up to your discretion.

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you very much for being here, Minister.

Mr. Jaffer.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** I wanted to follow up on something that I think Mr. Anderson was talking about, because in trying to deal with some of the issues of settlement, especially in the Ontario agreement, I was taken by some of the numbers we're looking at now. According to the table we received from CIC on the allocation for 2005-06 settlement funding, I believe it will be around \$856 per immigrant, in the calculation that I did, but I believe it was in May that the minister said the estimates would be increased to an amount of about \$3,400.

We're much lower than what the minister had been talking about before, so I was hoping to get some clarification on why that amount or where it would be made up because it speaks specifically, I think, to dealing with the settlement issue that Mr. Anderson spoke of, and this wouldn't seem to do the work.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** There are two items in the supplementary estimates I would point you to, according to my notes here.

The first one is actually the third line item here, which is increased settlement funding to improve immigrant integration into Canadian society, with a total of \$19.787 million. That is the 2005-06 allocation of funding related to the announcement that was in the 2005 budget, where the Minister of Finance indicated that the government would be increasing funding for integration and settlement services to all provinces outside the province of Quebec, which has a separate agreement, to the total of \$298 million over five years. That obviously starts small and ramps up over the course of five years.

In addition to that, in May 2005, as you indicated, the Prime Minister and Premier McGuinty made an agreement in terms of an additional amount that would be invested in immigration integration and settlement services in the province of Ontario. And what you see again in the supplementary estimates in the second line item, funding in support of a Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, with a total of \$27.466 million, would be over and above that. So Ontario will benefit from an amount out of the budget 2005 funding and, in addition to that, will benefit from a top-up from the Canada-Ontario agreement.

Once it's fully phased in, the intention will be that we will be in the order of the amounts that were discussed at the time of the Prime Minister and the premier's announcement in May 2005, but those amounts are not in these supplementary estimates. This is solely for the first year.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** I see. So then we would expect, I guess, over this period that the amount should hit that?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** That's right. The supplementary estimates are basically Parliament's opportunity to vote for the department funds that were relating to announcements made too late to be captured in the main estimates. Anything that was in the budget or announcements that would have taken place after the budget, after we've been through our Treasury Board process, comes forward to Parliament to vote those appropriations.

I would expect that those amounts will be contained in the main estimates of the department going forward. So this is an adjustment process. They'll be in the mains going forward.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Okay.

I don't know whether we got clarification on this the last time the minister was here, but I wasn't clear on the reason the government missed its target for skilled workers in 2004.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** I don't have the 2004 numbers with me, sorry.

Basically, we start out the year with a set of targets that we distribute to our offices around the world, and then we try to meet the targets that are set out for each of the different categories. What I think we reported in the annual report was that we had managed to meet the total number of landings for 2004; we came in at 235,000. But you notice we did deviate slightly in a couple of different categories relative to the target. I would hope that those landings will actually be coming through in this year. We may have issued the visas, but the individual may not actually have arrived here yet. The actual landings are reported for the year, so I think you may see there is a bit of a lag for 2004.

• (1650)

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** So everything is based on the fact that they have the visas, and it's a matter of getting them here?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** That's my expectation.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** There is one last question that I have. The minister said something about needing the money before having the plan. I was a bit surprised that he said that.

One thing in particular that I think you could clarify for us is the cost to process an immigrant. For instance, in the remainder of this fiscal year, how much will one parent and grandparent cost to process? I think we need to know this in order to understand what the plan is going to do.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** Let me try to explain what I believe the minister was trying to communicate, and then I'll tell you a little bit more about the plans for the balance of the year.

As the minister indicated, we have not been voted the funds by Parliament. That being said, we were trying to see whether we could do what's called cash manage and temporarily use other funds, which had been voted, to try to implement this initiative with the hope that

Parliament would then vote on the supplementary estimates and we would be able to replenish those funds within the department and complete our full mandate.

That is the basis on which we've actually been able to issue 19,000 approvals in principle and over 10,000 visas so far, which as you know is in excess of the target for the year. Mostly we've done that with temporary duty officers. Twenty-three temporary duty officers have been sent around the world to be able to do that. So there have been funds expended already.

The plan for the balance of the year—and this in a little bit more detail than I was able to provide to Madam Ablonczy—would then be to continue that staffing, which is not permanent staffing but a combination of casual and term staff. The bulk of the staff will actually be locally engaged staff, and those are employees who are hired by Foreign Affairs Canada. They are locally engaged staff who are operating in our offices abroad; they wouldn't necessarily be CIC staff. By using that staff, together with temporary duty officers from Canada, we would be able to plan to meet the target that the minister gave us for 18,000 parent and grandparent visas in the year.

Of course, what do you need to be able to support that operation? You need equipment, travel expenditures, overtime expenditures, and support through other parts of our operation, which includes the call centre, our domestic offices here, for landing, and also our corporate services in the department as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

The chair made a mistake. I should have recognized Mr. Siksay before, and I did not, so I'm going to recognize Mr. Siksay.

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

A couple of years ago, this committee recommended to Parliament that the funding for settlement to Canada per newcomer be around \$3,000. Do you know where that \$19 million in the supplementary estimates gets us in terms of a per newcomer figure?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** It doesn't get us to \$3,000 per immigrant. It gets us to different points in different parts of the country. Let me see if I can flip through and find an on average of where we get to with the extra \$298 million at the end of the five years. I'll see if I can track that number down for you. Actually, can I commit to get back to you with that?

On the basis of the budget funding, I'll give you the average per capita in that last year. I would add, though, that on the basis of the Canada-Ontario agreement, we will be at a higher amount in the province of Ontario.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** I also want to come back to the federal interim health program. You said there is an extra \$16 million in the supplementary estimates for that, and you said it has been traditional that the department has come for extra money for it every year. I wonder if you can just give me some sense of what that's been like the last couple of years.

My specific question on it is whether it is related to increased health concerns among the refugees who come. I think you mentioned earlier that it was due to increased numbers, but I'm not sure we have significantly increased numbers in terms of refugees coming into the country.

I have heard from settlement agencies that some of the refugees they are settling now have come with more difficult health problems. Some of that's a good thing, because we know those folks have often languished longer than others in refugee camps, for instance. But I'm wondering if it's related to that kind of concern.

• (1655)

**Ms. Janice Charette:** Thank you. I'm going to try to give you a bit of clarity for that.

As I said, the approved base fund that we get every year through main estimates is \$32.7 million. The volume of population that we have to cover varies over that time, and \$32.7 million is not enough to cover the total population that we have to cover.

On the approved one-time funds, it depends how far back you'd like me to go. Going back to 2000-01, we asked for an additional \$3.2 million, and that was probably the lowest. In 2003-04, we asked for an additional \$24.7 million dollars, and that was probably the highest. This year we're asking for \$16.1 million, incremental.

As you may know, the interim federal health funding covers three groups of individuals. It covers refugee claimants, it covers convention refugees, and it covers individuals who are under Immigration detention for a variety of largely emergency or essential health services, treatment and prevention of serious medical or dental conditions, and some prenatal and obstetrical care, as well as some contraception services and essential prescription medications.

What I can't give you—and I think this is one of the things we're hoping to be able to understand better through the consulting study—is the degree to which the drivers of this spending are around volumes or around health care costs, and how we are best able to ensure that we can continue to provide that service in a cost-effective way. That's what we're hoping to be able to get through the study.

To answer your other question, my friend Mr. McWhinnie has given me the new funding under budget 2005. That will get us to a total per capita amount of approximately \$1,445 by fiscal year 2009-10.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Will the announcement Mr. Goodale made yesterday affect that target?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** The announcement made by Minister Goodale yesterday will increase the amount of funding for immigration and settlement services. It covers the province of Ontario, as well as what we'll be able to do in other provinces and territories.

We had a preliminary conference call yesterday with my counterparts in all the provinces and territories. There's also a meeting of a working group on settlement and integration taking place Wednesday and Thursday here in Ottawa, to talk about how to deal with the funds that have already been allocated. We'll have conversations, probably more on a bilateral basis, about what the particular needs, urgencies, and requirements are jurisdiction by jurisdiction, because they do tend to differ somewhat.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Back to the health one just quickly, was there a shift in policy about deliberately accepting people who were convention refugees in refugee camps and who had more serious health issues than we have accepted in the past? Has there been a distinct change in policy?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** I think it's fair to say that as a result of the new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, there was a policy shift so that the government-sponsored refugees we're accepting are those who are truly most in need. "Most in need" manifests itself in a number of different ways. It could be individuals who have corollary health difficulties, but they may have been living in protracted refugee situations for a long time. They may have quite a number of challenges, like living and operating within a northern community, in a society that has a lot of different habits and customs from what they're used to. These are people who may have been living in a situation without running water and without indoor facilities for some time.

The amount of adjustment and support requirements that these individuals have is more considerable, and we're working with the settlement and service-providing organizations to understand the nature of those needs and to try to figure out how we best respond to those. I don't think our programming is necessarily adequate to be able to deal with those outside of the health area, where I think we're trying our best.

**The Chair:** Mr. Temelkovski.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The air around Ottawa right now is not conducive to finishing some of our business. If the government doesn't get the confidence of Parliament within the next week or so, as anticipated, how will these programs be affected? Will they be affected in terms of numbers of people who come into Canada and in terms of waiting times?

Maybe you can provide us with some direction on that.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** I think you've heard from the minister on some of his views about what will happen in the absence of the approval of these supplementary estimates. I can tell you that there are quite a number of line items that we will not be able to continue for the balance of the year, and some of the initiatives that we have been trying to cash manage within the department we will not be able to continue.

We will not be able to proceed, for example, with flowing funds to any of the outside organizations that you see, or all of what is called vote 5 funding, or transfer payments. None of those payments will actually leave; we have not been cash managing any of those, so none of those expenditures would actually be made. None of those payments would be made to our settlement-providing organizations. None of the increase in integration funding, for instance, would take place. We would have to cease the investments we're making to try to improve service delivery to clients. We would have to stop the measures to try to accelerate the processing of parents and grandparents in Citizenship. We would not proceed with agreements with provinces and territories with respect to the implementation of the student initiatives.

I think I would have to turn to discussion with my chief financial advisers in the department, in terms of how to make sure we live within the resources that have been voted by Parliament.

• (1700)

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** To say the least, it would be difficult.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** Yes, it will be a challenge within the department, but that is part of our responsibility.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** If we have over 700,000 people waiting to come into Canada, and we process less this fiscal year, would you rightly anticipate that the numbers would increase considerably next year?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** The funding necessary to support the ongoing processing requirements of the department, the funding necessary to support the minister's targets in the annual report to Parliament, are contained in the main estimates. So we would continue to provide that processing.

The particular initiatives that you see here would not proceed. So I could anticipate that, yes, we would see longer processing times in our citizenship area, which you heard the minister discuss earlier in terms of his dissatisfaction with our performance in that area. I think you could see that, yes, we would continue to build up inventories, particularly in the parents and grandparents class, where we've been trying to make some headway to attenuate that inventory.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madam Grewal.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, to the witnesses, for your time.

I wish the minister were here, but I want to put the following on record: all the opposition members on this committee voted against the estimates two weeks ago, because we believe that we do not have full and rational information regarding your department's plans. So it is shameful that the minister has gone on Sher-e Punjab Radio twice and, today in particular, singled out and named only me as having voted against the estimates, thus holding me responsible for all of the backlog in his department and accusing me for the inefficiency in family reunification. The members and the minister fully know what is false and what is wrong. The minister owes me an apology for singling me out and giving untrue information on the air.

The Liberal government has had over 12 years to fix the immigration system, but instead, the waiting lines have grown longer over 12 years. For example, the waiting period for processing family class applications from India has gone from 22 months to 66 months. Spousal cases have continued to be refused based on arbitrary criteria, due to lack of training and cultural sensitivity. There are more people waiting in the backlog. I can go on and on, but time is limited.

So can the minister show that the money in the estimates will alleviate the problems with inefficiency and delays?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** I can't really offer a comment about the opening part of your remarks, Madam Grewal, but I can make sure that the minister is made aware of the comments you've made here today.

I think you will see the commitment we have in terms of these supplementary estimates, that they will be invested in the ways that are indicated here, and that we will be accountable to Parliament for the expenditure and the performance against these estimates through

both the annual report to Parliament and the departmental performance report. So you will see and be able to assess the degree to which we have implemented the funding as was voted and according to the commitments that were made.

● (1705)

**The Chair:** Madam Faille, I just gave you one short—

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Mr. Chairman, there's no more time in this round.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Can Art have one quick question, if there's time?

**The Chair:** One question, Art, since you haven't asked a question.

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am particularly interested in the minister's six-point plan. This is something he addressed the committee on the first time he appeared before us, of course looking for the incremental funding of \$168.5 million. He laid out six priorities. One of them was to get newcomers to Canada faster, as he pointed out here, and to work with businesses and unions to make sure Canada can get the skills it needs much faster than today.

What's the problem with the processing times right now? As well, if we take someone from, say, the Asia-Pacific area as a skilled worker, a permanent resident, why does the processing time on 30% of the applications take up to 42 months, and why in the Quebec application is that expedited in a fraction of the time? Why is that? It's all for the same application fee of \$550.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** I'll try to answer your questions, and you tell me if there's any part I haven't captured fully.

The challenge with processing times now is that we have a system where I think we are more successful in terms of being able to attract applications to Canada than we necessarily are able to manage in any one year. So what we have is more demand across a number of different categories. I think you'll see from the information we've tabled with the committee that those inventories are largely around skilled workers and around the parent and grandparent class.

If you look at some of our other categories, I think you'll find that processing times are actually coming down. For example, around spouses and dependent children, we've put a real priority in the department to try to reduce those processing times, to be able to bring families back together, including in some of our largest posts abroad, such as Delhi and Beijing. That has been a particular focus.

Within the skilled worker category, we have what's called the provincial nominee program. In the provincial nominee program we work with the provinces and territories. They select individuals who they would like to bring to Canada, and we basically process them on an expedited basis. So the processing times for those categories actually tend to be much faster than in our skilled worker category, where we proceed on the basis of first in, first out by each of our posts abroad. The provincial nominee program is a tool that allows us to be able to respond to skill needs.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Just to interject for a moment, I am aware of the provincial nominee program; I'm talking about permanent residence applications, skilled individuals, and the difference in processing between the federal application and the Quebec application. There's a vast difference there, I am told.

Perhaps you can tell me why, for applicants coming out of Asia-Pacific, for instance, it would take 42 months to process and finalize 30% of the cases—you can correct my numbers if they're wrong—and why, for Quebec applications, it would only take four.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** What I was trying to point out is that we have a number of different streams. On the skilled worker program overall, I don't have my detailed processing time numbers available. I can go back and look at them for you, in order to be able to show you what our processing times are on a post-by-post basis.

We do have an option whereby we can work with provinces that select their immigrants. That is the provincial nominee program in other provinces, and within the Quebec program we have a separate arrangement with the Province of Quebec. In each of those, the process is similar. They operate the selection process, and then we do the processing.

In both of those cases you will find that the processing times, both for provincial nominees and for nominees selected by the Province of Quebec, are faster than the skilled worker inventory more broadly, because demand for skilled workers exceeds our capacity to be able to process them and it exceeds the levels that we have set in each year. For example, in 2006, the minister has proposed a total number of skilled workers between 105,000 and 116,000. We have many more applications than that on inventory, so because demand exceeds the supply of spots available, we have an inventory that's building and we have tried to make sure we are as responsive as possible within the provincial nominee programs.

• (1710)

**Mr. Art Hanger:** So to deal with that so-called backlog, I still don't understand why, with similar applications, one would take about eight times longer than the other. I don't think you've answered that question for me yet if it's the same application. We're talking about the skilled worker category of permanent residents. However, there is an indication on this list of estimates that the minister wants to improve those times. Is that correct? How much money is allotted to specifically improving that problem?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** The amount requested related to improving processing times is the first item, "Funding to reduce the backlog of immigration and citizenship applications and to support a program for international students". That is related specifically to the line item for parents and grandparents, as well as citizenship. There is no funding requested. It's part of the supplementary estimates to deal with the skilled worker category.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Okay, to ask one other short one, the—

**The Chair:** You're now over by a minute and a half.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Do I have an opportunity to ask one short question?

**The Chair:** If you get a very short response.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Point four of the minister's six-point plan was to address the issue of undocumented workers. How much money has been allotted to address the issue of undocumented workers?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** There is no funding in the supplementary estimates to deal with the issue of undocumented workers. The minister is continuing to work on a strategy to deal with that, so no—

**Mr. Art Hanger:** This is one of the six priorities that he has listed on his statement, and that's why he's asking for \$168.5 million. You're saying there is no allotment to address this issue. Why is he putting it down as point four, then?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** The \$168 million is related to the specific items that you see here. The minister set out in a six-point plan, in January 2005, the priorities that he'd be working on as the minister. These are the items we have been able to bring forward so far. Work is continuing on a number of other items that are listed in that six-point plan.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** So of the six-point plan, how many other items listed here are not going to be funded by this \$168.5 million?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** There are a number of initiatives under way. Some of these contribute to those six points, but there is other work under way that I think the minister has spoken about at this committee.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** So this really isn't an accurate account of where the money is going. If he's listing six points in his plan and he ties them directly to the \$168.5 million, then it's not an accurate account.

**Ms. Janice Charette:** The \$168 million is to address the issues that are listed here, some of which are reflected in that six-point plan. This is not all the funding necessary to fully implement all of the items listed in the minister's six-point plan.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madam Faillie, you have time for a very short one, and then we're going to cut it off. Please keep it really short.

[Translation]

**Ms. Meili Faillie:** If the Chair keeps talking, it will take even longer.

In fact, I would just like some clarification. Earlier, when talking about the 9.6 million dollars allocated to service improvement, you provided a list of projects. Does this also include increased resources in the Mississauga processing centre?

**Ms. Janice Charette:** I would need to check the figures, I am not sure. The amounts for 2005-06 are for resources in Ottawa. We hope to be able later this year to hire a person as client services coordinator in Mississauga. This person would handle the more complex applications and also the requests from MPs and senators. We have to wait for the committee to approve the supplementary estimates.

**Ms. Meili Faillie:** Okay.

• (1715)

**Ms. Janice Charette:** So it includes a position in Mississauga.

**Ms. Meili Faillie:** Is there any funding included in those estimates to follow up on the announcement made by the government about Service Canada that those service points will be able to answer immigration questions?



**Ms. Janice Charette:** In the first phase, our plan is to work with Service Canada on three aspects. First, we worked with Service Canada on instructions to be given to the telephone operators of 1-800 O-CANADA to enable them to answer questions about any service. In our case, we are talking about services related to citizenship, immigration and refugees. It is really a high level script and they are able to refer calls to our call centre if the questions are of a more complex nature.

Secondly, we work with Service Canada staff to enable them in their offices to provide an application kit to people who need one and to assist clients in filling out all our forms, if required.

Thirdly, it is to assist people who need help to navigate on our Web site in order to find information.

These are the three aspects on which we are presently working with Service Canada. However, the Department is committed to find the best way to work with Service Canada in order to improve the quality of our service to clients.

**Ms. Meili Faille:** Would it be possible at some later time to provide us the accountability framework you have for Service Canada staff? As you know, the information to be provided about immigration matters can be very complex.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, we can ask for information. It will come to us in a written form...any questions that you would like to have elaborated on further, responses you'd like to get.

My question to the committee is whether you feel comfortable enough right now to vote on the estimates, or do you want to put it off for another meeting? This chair is not going to make the mistake he made the last time.

What's your feeling on that?

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Mr. Chair, I think all of us are a little dismayed by the lack of clear plans for this spending. I take the attitude that some money is better than none, I guess, but really, it's just something we have to hold this department and this minister to account for, because on important issues he doesn't seem to know how money is going to be spent. I think that's irresponsible on his part.

I think we should have the vote now and get on with other business, but the minister should be put on notice that he has disappointed.

**The Chair:** All right. Well, I know this is a charged atmosphere that we're operating in. Anyway, let's go with the vote. Your comments are taken.

Does everybody else feel comfortable with going ahead?

I'll call the question.

#### CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Department

Vote 1a—Operating expenditures—To authorize the transfer of \$1,438,000 from Citizenship and Immigration Vote 5, *Appropriation Act No. 2, 2005-2006* for the purposes of this Vote and to provide a further amount of..... \$103,406,467

Vote 5a—The grants listed in the Estimates and contributions – To authorize the transfer of \$193,483 from Citizenship and Immigration Vote 1, and \$116,800,000 from Human Resources and Skills Development Vote 5, and \$215,969 from Canadian Heritage Vote 5, *Appropriation Act No. 2, 2005-2006* for the purposes of this Vote and to provide a further amount of..... \$65,109,000

(Votes 1a and 5a agreed to)

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Vote 10a — Program expenditures.....\$8,629,350

(Vote 10a agreed to)

**The Chair:** Shall the chair report votes 1a, 5a, and 10a under Citizenship and Immigration to the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Just before we go, we have a notice of motion coming from Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Chair, actually there are two notices of motion, and I'm going to do them verbally.

The first one is that the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration ask Canada Post to issue a series of commemorative postage stamps marking significant refugee movements to Canada, that this series begin by marking the 50th anniversary of the arrival of Hungarian refugees from the Hungarian uprising of October 1956, and that other refugee movements, including but not limited to those from Uganda, Vietnam, Indochina, and the former Yugoslavia, be considered.

That's the first one, Mr. Chair.

The second one is a bit longer and goes as follows: That the committee call on the government to immediately consider new streamlined and automatic measures for urgent and expedited humanitarian and compassionate reconsideration of refusals of temporary resident visas where the potential visitor was invited by a Canadian or a permanent resident or a person with other status in Canada to visit for the purpose of attending a family wedding, a family funeral, or the birth of a relative's child, or for attending to a relative who is seriously or terminally ill; that consideration in these specific instances tend to the permissive as opposed to the restrictive while giving appropriate attention to security and health issues; that in such cases the definition of family be broadly interpreted, recognizing the many configurations of Canadian families; that the review be conducted by a senior departmental official other than the officer who made the original decision; that the government consider using all possible mechanisms in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to ensure compliance with any temporary resident permit issued under these circumstances; and that any new measures required to successfully engage this policy be introduced in regulations or brought before the House of Commons.

● (1720)

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

Are there any more notices of motions?

This meeting is adjourned.





**Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons**

**Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes**

**Also available on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:  
Aussi disponible sur le réseau électronique « Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire » à l'adresse suivante :  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

---

**The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.**

**Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.**