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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, March 30, 2010**

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**Chair**

**Mr. David Tilson**



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•(1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)):** Order.

Madame Deschênes, you're becoming as regular an attendee as anyone at this committee, and I'd like to welcome you and your colleagues once again. As you know, we are studying the immigration application process in terms of wait times. You are here with your colleagues, and I don't need to tell you what to do, because you've been here so many times.

The floor is yours.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes (Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** I'm hoping you'll invite me once when I don't have to answer questions.

**The Chair:** Well, we'll see how things go.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to thank the committee for inviting me back to speak.

I am joined by Dawn Edlund, acting associate assistant deputy minister of operations; and Heidi Smith, director of permanent resident policy and programs at the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

I know you wish to hear about the progress we are making with family class and investor class processing, so I will focus my remarks on those themes.

As members are likely aware, the government's levels plan outlines the number of economic, family, and humanitarian immigrants we plan to admit in 2010. Canada plans to maintain immigration levels, welcoming between 240,000 and 265,000 new permanent residents in 2010.

The slight increase in economic immigration—now at 64%, compared with 60% in 2009—is intended to support Canada's economy as it recovers from the recession. It will also allow us to further reduce the application backlog in the federal skilled worker category. It is well known that all labour market growth will soon come from immigration, so our plans for family class admissions have been adjusted accordingly. Although lower projected admissions in the family class reflect a decline in the number of applications in the spouse and dependent children category, family reunification, including parents and grandparents, continues to be a strong component of the levels plan.

The CIC has adopted greater flexibility so that parents and grandparents who wish to visit family in Canada may apply for a multiple-entry visa while waiting for their immigration application to be finalized. This flexibility allows them to enter Canada several times during the period their visa is valid. Spouses and partners make up roughly 90% of the family class applications, and these continue to be put in active processing as soon as they are received.

[Translation]

Because we have finite resources to distribute around our global visa office network, we work to ensure that those resources are strategically placed to maximize service for all our overseas applicants.

I'm pleased to report that between 2004 and 2009, there was improvement in processing times for 80% of family-class priority cases, including spouses, partners and children. For example, processing times went down in the following regions: Abidjan, from 28 months down to 10; Accra, from 31 months down to 21; Damascus, from 14 months down to 7; Tel Aviv, from 11 months down to 9; and Manilla, from 12 months down to 9.

As I indicated during my appearance last October, a high degree of fraud, civil unrest and political instability in some corners of the world have added time to the application process and to global processing times for family-class applicants.

[English]

Much of the increase in processing time was confined to a few offices, such as Colombo, Hong Kong, Nairobi, and Islamabad. This was due to a number of factors, including the need to prioritize and complete older and more challenging cases, to root out fraudulent applications and relationships of convenience, and to screen for security or criminal inadmissibility.

Processing times have increased over the past few years at the visa office in Nairobi due to various factors, including the challenge of serving 18 countries. Arranging interviews with applicants is made problematic by communications that are often unreliable, making it difficult to contact applicants; the complexity of arranging travel within the large geographic area managed by the office; and issues related to regional security. To improve processing, CIC is adding extra resources to missions, such as the one at Nairobi.

Turning now to immigrant investors, in 2007 we increased processing from 1,000 to 2,000 cases annually. In 2008, immigrants invested over \$550 million in Canada. Processing times for this category, both federally and in Quebec, have generally improved in the past five years, going from an average of 43 months in 2004 down to 32 months in 2009. Between 2004 and 2009, processing times for 80 percent of federal and Quebec investors went down as follows: in Damascus, from 45 to 34 months; Beijing, from 47 to 30 months; London, from 30 to 25 months; and Buffalo, from 34 to 26 months.

[Translation]

The challenge we now face in some missions overseas is that the intake of federal investor applications more than doubled in 2008 and 2009. In Hong Kong, for example, the number jumped from 3,459 in 2004 to 11,244 in 2008.

We have responded to these increases by transferring some files between offices, where resources and space are available to process large inventories of applications.

Based on an earlier experiment in which skilled-worker files from Delhi were transferred to Warsaw for processing, we've recently begun to include applications from Damascus.

For the first six months of this year, 2010, we are transferring a limited number of files from Damascus to London in order to reduce processing times by taking advantage of the London office's processing capability and specialized expertise. This will help inform CIC of possible longer-term solutions to processing this complex but important movement.

Over the past 15 years, CIC has pursued a number of policy, program, service and operational initiatives aimed at transforming the way we do business.

These include a new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the creation of case processing centres, the consolidation of regional call centres and the realignment of the CIC international service network. As I've already mentioned, we have experimented with moving files from one location to another, to balance workload issues or to access specialized expertise.

• (1540)

[English]

Beginning this summer, we plan to gradually phase out the largely outdated computer-assisted immigration processing system, CAIPS, as well as the immigration medical system, IMS, which are now operating in all of Canada's overseas missions. We will replace them with the global case management system, or GCMS.

Introduced in 2004, GCMS is being used today to process more than 200,000 applications a year for Canadian citizenship and proof of citizenship. Testing of the full system for immigration overseas is scheduled to be completed by April 6 of this year. GCMS release two will be introduced to visa offices overseas one at a time, starting at the end of June in Port of Spain.

As more visa offices are brought online, CIC users in Canada and overseas will have greater access to more complete applicant

information in one place. We expect an international rollout of the entire system by March 2011.

Once GCMS is in place, we will have greater flexibility to balance our resources and workload in our overseas offices and to share information more easily with partners and security agencies. If a disaster such as the earthquake in Haiti were to strike a CIC office again, GCMS would allow us to quickly identify officers located in other offices to work off electronic files and to continue active processing.

GCMS will also better equip us to detect and prevent fraud. In fact, it has already been useful in helping us root out residency and workplace fraud.

As a fundamental component of CIC's service innovation agenda, GCMS is laying the foundation for future service enhancements.

As well, Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned last fall, since February 2009, students using e-services have been able to extend their study permits online. Building on the success and popularity of these online services, our so-called e-suite of services has now been expanded beyond students, allowing more in-Canada temporary residents, including workers and visitors, to apply online for work permits or for an extension of their visit in Canada. Later this year, CIC will also begin testing the use of e-services for student applications at selected missions overseas.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the use of biometrics will improve the quality of our immigration decisions and signal another important step in helping to reduce identity fraud and enhance the safety and security of Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Chairman, processing applications, including conducting proper medical and security checks, takes time and is linked to our yearly levels plan tabled in Parliament.

We are moving forward with a modernized, responsive immigration program that delivers on the government's commitment to supporting Canada's economy, reuniting families and protecting refugees.

Thank you. My colleagues and I would be pleased to answer any questions committee members might have.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Deschênes.

I regret to inform you that I think there are going to be some questions.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Really?

**The Chair:** I'm afraid so.

Monsieur Coderre has the first seven minutes. Monsieur Coderre.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** I am worried, Mr. Chairman. It seems that I see the deputy minister more often than I see my wife these days, because of the number of times she has appeared before our committee. Of course, this is the only place I see her.

Ms. Deschênes, it seems that we are always starting from scratch. When I was minister, this is what we talked about. At the time, we had established the GCMS. If you take a step back, do you think that the problems associated with processing times is a matter of structure or money? There has always been a backlog. Political parties have always blamed each other for this problem. But the fact of the matter is that you can't escape reality when processing each case.

My first question is very simple. Do you think that there is a problem with regard to financial and human resources, or do you believe that there is a structural issue due to the GCMS?

• (1545)

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I think that the department has the funds needed to carry out its obligations. However, each year brings a greater number of applications than we can process. This represents both an opportunity as well as an operational challenge for the Canadian government.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Obviously, in 1995, as you will recall, a program review was conducted. We had decided to identify regions. London would be responsible for part of Europe, as well as the Persian Gulf. There was also Paris and the other missions. Now it appears that a certain form of decentralization is possible. More specifically, if we are looking to streamline what is done with francophone immigration, then the ambassadors of other countries will be turning to you.

Take the Maghreb, for example, and given the additional tools and funding—the amounts have increased since 2004; between 2005 and 2009, there was an additional injection of funds—are we ready to start decentralizing processing activities, rather than have everything move through Paris or Hong Kong? Could the service points where visa or immigration applications are submitted also become part of the processing solution?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** As things now stand, the data are not in the system. We have very little data, and the majority of documents and information is in hard copy. Therefore, all the money has to be kept to preserve those documents and records. The GCMS will allow us to store much more electronic data. With the system in place, case decisions that do not require knowledge of the region in question will be able to be made outside the region, in a centralized location. As for the elements that might pose a risk, and where an interview is required because the criteria have not been met or questions have been raised, that work would be conducted on location.

With the biometrics program, we have to determine whether we want to serve a greater number of locations, in smaller offices, and whether the larger offices will provide support services by opening and managing the case files. That is what the system will allow us to do.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** There is the basic case processing part, when the officer receives the file. There is an interview, and so on

and so forth. Here you must perhaps wait on other agencies. There are medical issues, but also issues of security. It cannot be boiled down to "been there, done that, got the T-shirt". You cannot tell the persons responsible for security issues to speed it up because you need the data. They themselves are complaining of a lack of resources.

Are you satisfied with the time spent on processing cases, in terms of security?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I would say that we are very satisfied with 80% of cases, and that the remaining 20% are probably a bit more complex. The problem is not caused by the analyses that must be conducted with our partners. The vast majority of processing delays are caused by the fact that cases have to wait before they can enter into the various levels of the system.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Would it be fair to say that the 20% almost always show up in the same regions of the world?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I wouldn't necessarily say that because people are quite mobile, and so often—

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** I understand that they move around. They have understood things. Very well.

How are things going for Quebec? Have you received more Haitian applications?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** In fact, I spoke with the assistant deputy minister in charge of operations in Quebec this morning.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** I do not want to know whether you've been having discussions with him; I want to know whether you have received cases from Quebec. Have you received any?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I do not have that information with me, but I will send it to you.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Very well.

As for cases of fraud, a number have still been found in certain regions. We have heard of Damascus and Port-au-Prince, before the earthquake. Are there fewer cases today? Are there fewer internal investigations?

• (1550)

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Are you talking about cases that have been submitted to us? Very well. With regard to fraud, I think that we have to systematically stay ahead of the curve. In fact, it is still possible for a number of our clients to try and find the weak link. That is why we are continuing to address that issue. We also want to increase quality assurance.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Currently, what is the weak link?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Take for example the family reunification category, in the case of Hong Kong. Processing times have greatly changed over the past few years because of the major shift in movement. We found that many people moved around in order to come to Canada, but that they were not—

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Are there offices where things have improved? What is the situation like in Islamabad and Damascus? Are there problems there?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** If you're talking about our clients—

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** I am talking about security, fraud and those types of things.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** We still have a number of challenges with regard to clients who try to submit fraudulent documents.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Is the staff faring well?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Yes.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur St-Cyr.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to better understand the consequences of an increase in the number of applications. Obviously, the processing time is lengthier, but at the same time there are more resources because applicants have to pay to have their cases examined.

Whether for the family reunification or investor immigration categories, I would like to know if, on average, the amounts paid by those applicants cover the costs of processing their files.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** In terms of cost recovery, the amount is set to cover the costs of the department and partners to process an average application.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Very well. I may therefore presume that, if the number of applications was to increase significantly in a region, there would be enough financial resources to deal with that. The funds might not be raised in the region, but the department would make them available to eventually hire new employees or obtain other resources.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** The funds are not available within the department. The request, therefore, is sent to the government's revolving fund, within the Department of Finance.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** In other words, you have a funding envelope that comes directly from the department, but not all revenues collected are returned to you. They return to the fund, and it is up to the government to allocate them as it so pleases. But in terms of cost recovery for taxpayers, the impact is basically neutral. An increased number of applications does not amount to an additional financial burden for taxpayers.

I have often reflected on the issue of wait times and, unfortunately, it is often my impression that, as regards immigration, but in other sectors as well, they are not only a consequence of a lack of resources, but also, to a certain extent, of the way inventories of applications are managed. For example, if we take the overall quota of 240,000 applicants a year, if my memory serves me correctly, and reduce the wait times to under 12 months across the board, we would completely shatter the 240,000 figure, because the only way we can actually affect the number of applications is by using the resources that are made available. Is that correct?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I believe that it is very important for people to realize that the number we say will be processed each year and which is tabled in Parliament, is the number we want to achieve. In a certain sense, it is true that we do not want to exceed that

number because it is based on the money that is available to help those people settle in Canada.

• (1555)

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** If we are to keep the same quota, with the same objective and criteria, there is no point in speeding up the processing times indefinitely because, in any event, if we were to do that, we would exceed the quota.

[English]

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Did you want to explain the levels?

**Ms. Heidi Smith (Director, Permanent Resident Policy and Programs, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** As Madame Deschênes was saying, the levels are set each year. They're based partially on inventory and they're based on consultations with the provinces and other stakeholders. They're based on what we're resourced to do, and they also have to include some kind of absorptive capacity and settlement funding. So it's not a simple—

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** I understand where you're getting at. I am not asking you to make a policy statement on the levels or resources, I simply want to check something with you. If Parliament were to allocate more resources to process all applications within six months and keep the same criteria, we would completely exceed the quotas.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Yes, and that is one of the reasons why we are very satisfied with the minister's guidelines and the decisional leeway within the new system, which allows us to reject some applications and not have to process them.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Right. Just as there is no official regional quota, when Parliament determined the number of people that can enter the country each year, it did not determine how many would come from Africa, Asia, etc. In fact, it is accurate to say that the allocation of resources to the various missions will mean that more or fewer people will be able to come in from the different regions.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** The operational figure is determined by operations and takes into consideration not only immigration but also temporary movement. This also takes officers into account, as well as the space we have in our missions.

Now, if we displace one resource from one office to another, we also try to look, long term, at how many people will come. For example, at one time, operations in India grew because we were looking for people who had IT skills.

We try to determine where to send our officers, not just now, since we try to anticipate how the labour market demand will change, and we also take temporary workers and students into account.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Ultimately, the waiting time depends on the management choices that are made, meaning which areas will get priority for immigration and those that are given less priority.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** No, rather it is based on the location of our resources. We try to have resources throughout the world. For example, people might ask why do we have resources in Buenos Aires? Perhaps it is not effective to have that. However, our strategy ensures that we have international immigration. There are small offices that are not as efficient as an office where we can achieve economies of scale.

[English]

**The Chair:** Merci.

Ms. Chow.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** On the same point, I know you have targets for the visa offices—right?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** We have operational levels.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Absolutely, and they're public.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Yes.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Perhaps that can be tabled at the committee.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** As long as it's tabled in the context that we set them and we change them through the year.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Yes. I totally understand.

But once you hit the target—let's say in New Delhi the target is something like 13,000 for the entire family class—and you estimate how many staff you need, even though you have many more as a backlog, you don't continue. You don't all of a sudden tomorrow say you'll process 25,000 family class applicants from New Delhi. Even if you have the resources, you wouldn't do that.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Normally the level or the operational target we give is based on the distribution of every category in every mission and the staff we have. So we look at New Delhi and we say they have this much backlog in this group; we know family class one, so spouses—

• (1600)

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** So would you stop the applications if you hit the target?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Targets are set on visas issued. Levels are based on admissions. So we always overshoot how many we want to arrive.

Am I going to tell you that any manager would have followed my word and said to keep going, or some have stopped because they feel that they've done the year and they'll start again? I don't think anybody normally meets the target until October, November, or December, and normally it's not a matter... They stop, but they then put their resources back into the first steps. Rather than finishing the file, they might put more cases into an interview queue and that type of thing.

**The Chair:** Excuse me. I just want to make sure you've undertaken to provide us with those targets, those caps.

**A voice:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Sorry, Ms. Chow. Thank you.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** So let's say you're finished by August—

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** It has never happened. I wish.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** All right. I was just being optimistic.

So the targets are really set according to how many staff you have. But if tomorrow we say that we want the target in New Delhi to be 20,000 family class applicants rather than 12,700, you would get extra staff, if it fits there, to decrease the wait times, etc. That is certainly doable, right?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** As long as it fits the overall—

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** That's right. Then the family class application would have to be bigger. The numbers would have to be bigger overall, etc. It would have to go maybe over 265,000 or whatever, but it's certainly doable.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I'll just note that the operational targets are also based not only on the staff we have and the movement and all other things, but also possible additional money to put into temporary duty. So many of the missions, and the bigger missions, also need temporary duty to help them to attain those, because we know there's a big backlog and we want to clear as much as we can, and we try as much as we can to keep all things equal, but some cases are much harder to process than others.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** I understand.

It will take you a year or two to get the sponsorship approved, and then you interview the applicants. So why not tell people it's a two-step process and you don't need to pay for the second step—that is, pay for the applicant's piece—until you get to that?

Right now, what's happening is that the sponsors put in the application and they come to the MP's office and say, "I've been waiting for a year. My father hasn't even had an interview yet, and the medicals, etc." Why not be very clear that it will take at least a year before we've even finished with the sponsorship examination?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I'll pass it to my colleague, who was formerly a senior counsel.

**Ms. Dawn Edlund (Acting Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you.

At the moment, our global processing time for family class, close family class, is 13 months, including sponsorship and—

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** I'm talking about Asia, actually—Hong Kong, New Delhi. For Islamabad and New Delhi, it's pretty long.

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** On the question of whether we should consider splitting the fee into sponsorship separately from the actual right of permanent residency, for example—

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Otherwise you could tell the applicants.

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** Well, applicants now have a great deal of information on the web in terms of processing times, particularly since we've added new material to the web. It tells you precisely the processing times in each location around the globe for each category of immigration application.

In terms of splitting the fee from what we currently do, that's actually under litigation before the Federal Court right now, so we're not really able to talk about it.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Never mind. Okay.

Let me go to another area, then.

I'm looking at the Hong Kong spouses, partners, and children. It can't be true that 62% of them are fraudulent. How many cases actually end up winning at the immigration appeal board?

•(1605)

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I'm not sure that I have that information. We have just come back from a program managers conference in Hong Kong, where we had a presentation on the Hong Kong family class issues. At this moment, I don't believe we're losing a lot of those cases.

Again, as I've mentioned before here, it's a new issue in Hong Kong, and it's tied to organized crime.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Is there any chance that you could provide a comparison to show that in the last few years the Immigration Appeal Division has approved the following spousal sponsorships from these missions, and therefore these are the lessons we learned from the Immigration Appeal Division? For instance, let's say  $x$  percent of them have been rejected, but  $y$  percent have been overturned. Surely if there's a pattern of overturning a certain mission's decisions, then there's something wrong with that mission. Do we actually learn from that and—

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** The comment I would make is that when they go to the Immigration Appeal Division, it's a *de novo* hearing. If it takes 18 months between the refusal at the mission and commencement at the Immigration Appeal Division, the Immigration Appeal Division will look at what happened in the intervening 18 months; I would hate to say this, but some of these cases will create a pretty good relationship record in the 18 months after the refusal, so it really doesn't tell us very much about whether the first decision was the correct one or not.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Deschênes.

Ms. Chow, your time is up.

Mr. Dykstra, please go ahead.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

One of the things you mentioned in here, Claudette, was that beginning this summer we plan to gradually phase out the largely outdated computer-assisted immigration processing system and

replace it with the global case management system. Could you expand on that a little bit? How is it going to reduce wait times, and how long will it actually take to implement the new system?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** From the perspective of wait times, if the wait time is based on our annual levels exercise, it's not going to help us that much. What it will help us to do, though, is use our resources in a different way.

Because global case management will have more information in electronic form, it will permit us to see much more of the file than we presently can. Right now, in our CAIPS system, it's very biographical. There's not a lot of information. The global case management system will permit us to streamline how we share information with our partners for purposes of screening. It will also permit us, as we add any application component, to think about doing a front-end and a back-end office, which does a lot of the administrative things so that officers overseas can really be focused on quality assurance, fraud investigation, intelligence-gathering, and interviews, when required.

Right now we have many officers doing a lot of other things, such as supervising registries and that type of thing. We think that with GCMS being rolled out and with the addition of the application that will then come, we will be able to refocus our resources so that our officers overseas will do value-added work, while we will do more of the back end and front end in Canada.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** That relates a little bit to the next question I have in terms of what's happening in Sydney, Nova Scotia, right now. Obviously the ministry has not been able to renew the employment of the temporary employees there, in addition to the 63 casual workers.

I want to give you an opportunity, from a ministry perspective, to present the reasons and the case for making the decision that we did in terms of not extending that short-term renewal.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Every year we start with what we call an A-base, which is the resources we have for permanent staff in our offices overseas and in Canada. We monitor the use of our money, and sometimes there are slippages because new money comes into the department or we have not been able to staff positions in other places.

In Sydney, we found additional money and hired people, telling them that these were term contracts, or casual 90-day contracts, so we could keep working and keep the files moving, but knowing that these were temporary resources and at the end of the fiscal year we would have to let them go.

This year again, as we move into the mid-term, we'll look at the resources we have and try to do the same thing. So the question for us is always, can we add a few staff for a period of time and get more work done, but knowing that these are not permanent staff?

•(1610)

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** In association with those staff, albeit that anything that's temporary you'd like to make permanent, are they fully aware that their opportunity is time-sensitive with respect to how much funding is available for that window?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** The letters they receive, just as if they would receive them in Ottawa or Toronto, clearly indicate that these are term positions or casual positions and that at that point it will end.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** When you go through the A-base, would you be able to do that on an international level, if we were in a position with respect to in-year funding, to assist in a country where we are backlogged with respect to wait times? Have we ever been able to try to work through that type of temporary system, or is that impossible to do internationally?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Overseas, we call it "temporary duty". Normally it's either staff who are sent from Canada in terms of officer decision-making, or what we call "emergency locally engaged staff". It may be for 30 days, or for 60 days or 90 days. Actually, we use a lot of emergency LES overseas.

Sometimes it's for peaks in terms of the summer. So you wouldn't need people all year, but in the summer when people want visitor visas, we would add staff.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** So Haiti would be a good example where we would have ramped up some emergency service.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** We have some emergency service. We have lots of temporary duty.

We have emergency service in Santo Domingo, and we have temporary duty there also.

And we're using, in the office in Canada, casual or emergency term positions too.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** So would you credit some of the reduction in wait times that we've seen here to some of that emergency scheduling or emergency planning, or putting those folks into those places?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I certainly would credit some to that. I would like to credit some to innovation and good management as well.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** The reason I ask is that obviously there has been some criticism of the decisions that were made in Sydney. It seems to me that if that criticism continues, it leads the ministry to not make decisions of adding additional staff because of the potential outcome that would be deemed negative versus positive, when in fact you have positive outcomes in terms of the temporary employment it provides and obviously the benefit it provides to the ministry itself in the processing and the reduction of those wait times. It would seem to me that it makes it difficult to move forward and make those decisions if at the end of the day you're going to be criticized for doing what you said you were going to do, which is to hold these as temporary positions.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Certainly I as ADM of operations, and also the group, sometimes feel that it doesn't matter what we do, we're going to be criticized. That said, I think we would still want to continue to do that. But yes, it is sometimes discouraging.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** This happened in 2006, and obviously in 2009-10 again. So I wonder how much impact that might have on the continued use of this process. It seems to me that while it does inevitably lead to the cutting off of a particular program because of its temporary nature, it can be of great assistance to the ministry.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** From our perspective, we will continue to want to use it. We wouldn't want to come here and tell you we've lapsed a lot of money, because then you'd ask us other questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. That concludes the seven-minute round.

I have a brief question for you. More than one constituent has come to my office and said that some of our staff in other countries have said, "Well, you know, if you give us a few dollars, we can speed up the process." It has been said by more than one constituent—not a lot, but more than one. I have no idea whether it's true.

First of all, do you have any facts that it might be true in some jurisdictions? Secondly, what training and safeguards have you gone through to ensure that doesn't happen?

I assume you have done something to make sure it hasn't happened, ever, but I'm just asking that question because that comment has been made in my riding.

•(1615)

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I'm glad you asked the second question, because I misunderstood your first one.

You are talking about people saying that if they paid something to somebody, they would be facilitated and get through.

**The Chair:** Yes, I am saying that.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I'd be naive if I told you that doesn't happen or people might not do that. My own experience is that often when that is said there is really no link to anybody who can make a decision or make it faster. There is a story created of a perceived link to somebody.

Certainly when we talk about Canada-based officers overseas, they make decisions, and so on, but part of their work also is to manage the risk in that environment. So part of the work they need to do is quality assurance on decision-making. They put in place systems in which sometimes people say there is no flexibility, but sometimes having no flexibility in the system ensures that nobody can skip a line and take money, and so on.

We certainly have systems in place. We do regular audits throughout our program where independent auditors come in and verify whether systems are in place that work. We want to continue to improve the quality assurance we do, not only on negative decisions but on the positive decisions, to make sure that people are entitled to get what they do.

It is a variety of things. We certainly work with the Department of Foreign Affairs in terms of their trade officers in some missions where the risk is very high. There are also places where we have security officers and we work with them. All our locally engaged staff is security-cleared, and there are local checks made that are updated periodically.

**The Chair:** Are you able to say whether some areas are worse than others? It's an awful question to ask, but I'm going to ask it anyway.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** You can look at corruption indexes that are international. In countries where they have trouble with corruption, we would probably say there is a higher risk of that type of thing happening.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Bevilacqua.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

I have a question related to people who work with the government, who sometimes lack the resources to do whatever they need to do. What do you need more of in order to improve the processing?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** You're going to say I'm a broken record, but I need global case management, I need an e-application system, and then I need a system that will permit me to have my resources on risk identification, quality assurance, and fraud investigations. That's what I really need to be able to do the work within the levels of exercise as efficiently and effectively as possible.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Why do you not have that?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** There were a few hiccups with global case management, but it's about to be landed. Once that is landed, the other things will happen.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** We can discuss this issue all we want, but if the resources are not made available to you to improve your productivity, to improve the processing time, then really it's a discussion where we're analyzing the problem but not really addressing the solution. So we're magnifying the problem by sitting here and talking about it, but we need to find ways to fix it. That's what I think we're here to do.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Speaking to that point, of course the other thing is that we need to control intake. When we have an intake we can't control and yet we know that we have a control on the number of people who can come every year, then our resources start moving to managing an inventory as opposed to processing cases. For us, the ministerial instructions were a great first step, but we need to keep going.

• (1620)

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** I know that a lot of people probably listen to our interventions here or read about them, but if you had your ideal situation, could you describe it? What kinds of tools would you have that you presently don't have?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** We've been working very hard to integrate our operational network. Global case management will give us a first capacity to do that, which will permit us then to put resources in the right place according to risk level. The lower the risk, the less you need to be in situ to do that workload, which would then permit us to get economies of scale.

So that's the first thing we need to do. We need to get out of paper, so electronic applications that would permit us to forget about inputting data.... All of that would be done by the client.

Biometrics will give us an intake system with a better way of identifying who is applying to us.

We need more performance management globally, because right now our caseload overseas is in 60-some individual missions. This is also being built into global case management.

That's what I see. And then you do just-in-time processing.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** What concerns me is that this issue is more problematic and deeper than we think. The reason I say this and the reason I asked you to describe for me your ideal situation is that when you described to me your ideal situation, I saw an enormous gap between your actual reality and what your projected or ideal reality would be.

The challenges we face as a committee in making recommendations to the minister are quite significant, because there is a major gap here. You're there doing the job you're supposed to do, but from what I gather, without a lot of the tools that you need.

This is going to require the right type of investment, if we as parliamentarians expect the numbers to go down. I often hear that it's the system and that we could do it without resources. The type of things you're talking about are going to cost money and are going to require investment. If we're serious about building an immigration system that works and works well and we collectively as parliamentarians have expectations from it, then you have to make investments. If you don't make investments, these numbers aren't going to come down because of some kind of divine intervention; that's not going to happen.

So I hope we're all paying attention, in that there is a major gap between what the people who work in the department say they need and what they actually have.

**The Chair:** I am paying attention, and you're out of time.

Madame Thi Lac.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thāi Thi Lac (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Good afternoon, ladies.

You have told us about the major advantages and impacts on the waiting times of the new system that will be implemented.

First, you said that you had reduced waiting times at Abidjan, Accra, Damascus and Tel-Aviv. Are the resources that you have put in place temporary or permanent?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Everything is not tied just to resources. I would be lying if I said that we always have the right person in each office. It is a combination of things. But sometimes it is resources. Sometimes, it is about helping the mission become better organized in doing its job. Sometimes, it is about improving infrastructure. So, there are all these things at the same time. I would say that some of these missions have benefited from additional resources, but many others did not.

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** We know that medical exams are valid for only one year. When we see that, in Accra, there is still a 21-month waiting period, this forces people to undergo another medical exam. This can have an impact on the waiting period. Is it not a disadvantage for people when we see that the waiting period is 21 months and that the department continues to say that medical exams are only valid for one year? With that inflexible standard, we are forcing people to undergo another medical exam and to commence a complex process in such countries.

• (1625)

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Perhaps we should consider whether a medical exam at the start of the process is a good way to proceed in some situations. The validity of the medical exam is a way to protect the security of Canadians. It is tied to the fact that tuberculosis is endemic in a number of countries. I don't know whether extending the period of validity of the medical exam is a good solution. However, perhaps we could consider this.

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** I see that, in Accra, the application processing time went from 31 months to 21 months. Despite the fact that there has been a 10-month decrease, it is still quite high since the other times also went down, except for Abidjan that more than increased its performance. In Tel Aviv, it was already under a year, Manila was 12 months and Damascus was 14. Why did you make it a priority to reduce the processing times, which were, in my opinion, more acceptable at 11 and 12 months, rather than giving priority to places such as Accra where the processing time was 31 months? Despite everything, we now see that it takes nearly two years.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** In this case, the problem is not really a matter of resources, it's because of the kind of cases where a DNA test is essential to ensure a real relationship. Sometimes, there are mail problems. We try to communicate with the individual, but they do not receive the letter and we have to make several attempts. Sometimes, it's because the people do not come to the interview. These cases are more difficult to resolve with the addition of more resources.

We are currently looking at whether we could ask the Canadian sponsor to do more so as to cut the waiting time. At the same time, we want to avoid a solution that will make it even more difficult for the sponsor because perhaps they will end up with the same problem. We are examining this further. We are currently preparing to remind all missions what to do to ensure that the initial process is as short as possible. We realize that, in certain missions, the process is short because, in the beginning, an officer assesses the case immediately and is immediately able to make a decision based on needs.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Dr. Wong is next.

**Mrs. Alice Wong (Richmond, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming to this committee.

My questions are focusing on immigration investor cases.

As you have stated, in 2008 alone immigrants invested over \$550 million in Canada, and probably between 2004 and 2008 the processing times for 80% of federal and Quebec investors went

down. I'm interested in Beijing, which went down from between four and seven months to three months. But then, you're concerned about Hong Kong. When I look at the number for Hong Kong, it jumped between 2004 and 2008. In 2004 we had about 3,500 only, but then as we went to 2008 the number jumped to almost 12,000.

So, in Hong Kong do they process not just investor immigration files from Hong Kong itself but also from some other provinces of China? Am I right to assume that?

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** Yes, Hong Kong treats cases from other parts of China as well. I don't have the figures.

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** I think it's southern China—Guangdong and some of the others.

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** Yes.

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** The reality of the economic situation in China is that those are the places where people really grow in wealth, and people are now ready to come as investors. Is this one of the reasons that all of a sudden we have so many more applications?

• (1630)

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** I think there are a few different reasons for that increase in applications. Certainly the wealth of some of these populations has increased significantly in the last few years. We've seen similar sorts of trends, though, in other business immigration cases for other countries. For example, the EB-5 visa in the U.S. has tripled in the last year or two. We're seeing similar increases around the world. There are people with that kind of net worth who are on the move, certainly. It's hard to pin to one specific cause the reason for seeing such a dramatic increase.

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** You mentioned one of the countries that seem to have similar challenges. If you look at the processing times for investor-class immigrants, how does ours compare with similar programs of other countries? You mentioned one country.

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** I'm afraid I don't have those numbers in front of me right now, so I couldn't really comment in any detail.

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** Do you think we can have those numbers?

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** Yes, we can look at that.

**The Chair:** That's another undertaking, then. Is that okay?

Thank you.

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** I'm also interested in the flexibility that CIC has adopted. Page 2 of your presentation says:

CIC has adopted greater flexibility so that parents and grandparents who wish to visit family in Canada while waiting for their immigration application to be finalized may apply for a multiple-entry visa. This flexibility allows them to enter Canada several times during the period their visa is valid.

Can you comment a little more on this and say what benefits it's going to bring about.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** At the moment, there's a major backlog in the number of cases of parents and grandparents that we can deal with every year. But we also recognize that parents and grandparents might want to visit and so on. If there's a sponsorship and they make an application for a visitor visa, we examine it in terms of issuing a multiple visa, valid for the time their passport is valid, which would permit them to come and go as they want while the case is still waiting in Mississauga to be sent to the mission for active processing.

One of the things we are finding in the parents and grandparents line of business is that it is sometimes very difficult to get the applicant to submit the medical and other forms they need, because they have less interest in coming to live permanently in Canada; they want to come when the weather is warm and go home when it's not. This permits them to come and go as they want in the period of the validity of the visa.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Dr. Wong.

Mr. Young.

**Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

With respect to family class, you comment in your submission that the spouses and partners make up roughly 90% of the family class applications. Home is where the heart is, and those are the cases we get in our Oakville office. A lot of them are spousal, and they're heart-wrenching, some of them. We do our best to try to reunite married couples.

Can you please describe briefly how they are handled in active processing? You say that you put them at the top of the pile, is that right?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** That's right. As soon as they come in they are put into active processing; then they would be processed to finalization. Many of them don't need an interview. Those who need an interview are asked to come for an interview, and sometimes there's a queue, so there would be a period during which they might have to wait. As soon as their interview is done, if they're considered to be bona fide, we will finalize the security and criminality checks.

**Mr. Terence Young:** So they are prioritized?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** They are first priority—first priority of any priority.

**Mr. Terence Young:** In 2009, how many permanent residents came to Canada?

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** It was just over 252,000, I think.

**Mr. Terence Young:** That's what I thought. What's the ideal number?

**The Chair:** I don't know about asking that. Move on to another question.

**Mr. Terence Young:** I don't want to ask an unfair question. I guess what I'm asking is, if you had double the resources, what would be the ideal wait time, for example?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I guess I would simply say, although it is a resource issue in part, that this is not the entire story. The story is about the levels plan we put in front of Parliament every year.

•(1635)

**Mr. Terence Young:** You commented with regard to a high degree of fraud in some corners of the world. How much does fraud affect wait times? How much of your wait time issue is caused by fraud?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** We often talk about 80% of cases. That's a global number that says 20% of cases are complex. They're complex either because the relationship may be of convenience or because there's a medical issue, a security issue, or a fraud issue, and that depends on the movement.

**Mr. Terence Young:** Okay.

How much is caused by political instability and civil unrest? Can you estimate how much of the problem with wait times is related to that?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** That's the case in some places more than others. I remember, for example, when I used to serve in Sri Lanka, people who lived in Jaffna had to get a pass to get down to Colombo to do an interview. Sometimes they were able to get a pass very quickly; other times we had to reschedule them two to three times before they did that.

**Mr. Terence Young:** I'm just trying to get a handle on it. If you had double the resources and you had your global processing system, what, realistically, would we expect for processing times?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** If I didn't have to put cases in a waiting queue, I think we could—I'm going to get shot here—process cases within 12 months. Many of the cases are held in queue either at the beginning or at different times, because that's the nature of the exercise.

**Mr. Terence Young:** If you had an average of 12 months across the board, would you say we're where we want to be?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I'll turn that around and say that even if I said that, somebody would tell me it's not good enough.

**Mr. Terence Young:** Well, exactly. What I'm trying to relate is that with surgeries, for example, some people say waiting a month for knee surgery is too long, while other people think it's quite reasonable. For heart surgery, they say waiting a week is too long, but others think it's quite reasonable. I'm just trying to get a realistic handle on it. With the proper resources and a really well-run system, what would be reasonable? I assume it would vary from country to country, because there are 60 different offices. Is that fair to say?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** It would depend on the complexity of the movement. I would say it would also depend on the category, because you probably do want to have spouses and children come first.

**Mr. Terence Young:** Mr. Bevilacqua made it sound as though you're not doing a very good job at all in this big, urgent situation.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I missed that.

**Mr. Terence Young:** I think you do a pretty good job.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I didn't read it that way.

**Mr. Terence Young:** Yes, I think you're doing a terrific job. There are 252,000—

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** We have a point of order. We haven't had one of those for a while.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** I never said that, and I think you probably never took it at that—

**Mr. Terence Young:** That's not a point of order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Young, you have about ten seconds to finish up.

**Mr. Terence Young:** I think you do a terrific job.

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

Mr. Dryden, welcome to the committee. You have five minutes.

**Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.):** I'd basically like to ask pretty much the same questions, although maybe in a different way, to try to understand better. Maybe I'll use one country as an example and one person as an example.

Let's imagine it's Russia. Somebody comes to your door. Can you help me understand the different processes that person has to go through and how long it takes for each of those steps to be taken, assuming they are just steps to be taken and that no waiting here or there for them will be required? If you could take me through that, it would help me to understand a lot better than I understand at this moment.

So it's Russia and it's one person knocking on your door. Tell me what the next step is and how long that step, the actual step, takes. Then take me through the process until the application's approved.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Okay. Can I ask you one more question? What kind of person is this, in terms of the category?

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Let's say it's family class.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Okay. Let's say it's a husband of a Canadian citizen. Is that okay? It's a goaltender, yes.

To start with, the person doesn't show up in Moscow. The sponsor in Canada submits the application for that person, the application for her spouse, along with the medicals, to Mississauga. Mississauga opens the application and then sends it to Moscow, at which point Moscow looks at it. I'm going to have to reconfirm the numbers, but I will say that within four weeks Mississauga opens the file and sends it to Moscow. The paper file is sent by courier, while a certain part of it is downloaded electronically.

At that point, depending on how many applications are in Moscow, within ten days the application is supposed to be starting to be looked at in Moscow. At that point, an officer will look at the documents.... Do you want to stop me?

•(1640)

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** The only thing that's really a problem is that it's at the end of ten days, depending, you say, on the numbers.

I'm not talking about the numbers at the moment. I'm talking about how long each step really takes, to get an idea of how long a wait is the optimal wait. I understand you're not going to reach optimal waiting times; I just want to know how long each step takes in order to get through.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Okay.

Part of our problem in my answering the question is that right now CAIPS is a system that exists in each mission. It's difficult for me to

tell you, "In this mission...", although you're asking me for Moscow, and we could run numbers.

So it's ten days, open the case, look at the documents, make a decision: does it move on or does it need an interview? If it doesn't need an interview, very quickly after—we're talking about days—medical examination issued. The person, if he really wants to come to Canada, will go to get his medical. Let's assume he has given us all the documentation. Also, the other aspect is that we're checking with our partners. I'm not surprising you if I say that organized crime and where money is coming from and all of those issues constitute a concern.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** How long does that take?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** That can take a fairly short period of time or a very long period of time.

Again, I know you're telling me to forget the wait load, but if I have a lot of visitors coming from Moscow that the security service has to clear for the Olympics, the processing time is short.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** We're not talking about exceptions like that, about the Olympics and the rest of it. We're talking about the day-to-day; don't worry about the exceptions. I just want to get an idea of really how long it takes. It's only if we understand this that we can understand the whole question of resources.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** For family class priority, right now 80% of the cases in Moscow are done from beginning to end in nine months.

At the point.... I'm going to say it takes a month or two for the medical to come in, although I don't think it takes that long, assuming he has gone to his medical quickly. There's the background check. Then we are ready to finalize the documentation. We need to write to the applicant to say please send us your passport so that we can put your visa in your passport. Let's say that takes a week or two, or three or four, depending where he lives in Russia. That arrives, and within days—I was going to say instantaneously—the visa is issued and sent back to him.

Then that person makes a decision as to when he travels to Canada. At that point he can travel within the validity of his visa.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** That's out of your hands. I'm just talking about things that are in your hands. You're saying nine months in the non-special cases is what it takes now. What I'm asking you is, if we weren't talking about backlogs, how long would each step take short of nine months?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I'm not sure I can answer that. I can submit a written answer by looking at an average to give you that information.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** I have one last question, if it's possible.

**The Chair:** You're way over. I can't let you do that.

That would be a third undertaking.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Does that mean I don't have to come back?

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

I'm sorry; you were getting onto a good line, Mr. Dryden, but we have to move on.

Mr. Calandra.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When did you start on the process of the global case management system?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Do we have a note on that?

I should know, because I was there, but let me just see.

GCMS was originally funded in January 2002, and it has been rolled out and it's doing citizenship cases.

• (1645)

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** So it has been a long time that you've been working together.

I know the overall budget of the department has increased, because we've dealt with the estimates and we saw the budget. But there are some regions that just always have higher wait times; they're just persistently higher. I'm wondering whether you can give me the top five or six reasons, or even more, that those offices have higher wait times that make them different from anywhere else.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** One of the key issues is the type of clientele there. If there's lots of fraud, if we cannot trust the documentation, then we have to go to interviews, and interviews take much longer than looking at a file and moving it forward.

Another reason is if there are health issues. In many places there is tuberculosis. You cannot come to Canada with active tuberculosis; you have to be treated. If you're treated, you can come if you can show that it has become dormant. That's the period of time, when you're managing that file, when they have to get treatment.

Another is if there are issues of getting access to clients: we travel to them, but they don't show up for an interview, and we only travel into that region or that country once every six months, because we wait to have enough to make it a cost-effective use of Canadian taxpayers' money.

Another issue is if there are problems in correspondence. Still another is if there are problems in terms of how they describe their family to include a lot of people who are not necessarily their own children. We understand that culturally that's an issue, but does it fit within the definition that we have of family class?

So I would name all of those issues. There's a summer movement of visitors, when our first priority becomes doing the visitors, and so the immigration line of business waits.

There are infrastructure issues involving missions. We may not be able to put more staff on, even though there's been a serious increase

in applications. In Islamabad at one point there were problems of not being able to get off the compound. There are those types of things, things such as the civil war in Sri Lanka, the tsunami. Those are some of the things I think I would describe that make cases not the norm and therefore more difficult to process.

There are a number of requests from MPs for what's happening on a case, so you're now putting your efforts into answering queries. There are program integrity issues, wherein you have staff who are not doing decision-making but are making sure there's no malfeasance going on.

All of those things put together I think explain why some places take longer than others.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Just because you referenced it, let me ask whether the global case management will make it easier for members' offices to get information more quickly.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** The thing with global case management is that right now 90% of the information we need to process cases is on the paper file. Now it will be in the electronic system, which will permit us to look at it no matter where we are and divide the decision-making. We'll be able to say that all the documents are there, but we need to interview to figure out whether that person has the experience, for instance, of a federal skilled worker. We may ask the mission to do just this interview.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Markham, in my riding, which is Oak Ridges—Markham, is the most ethnically diverse community in all of Canada. One thing that frustrates me and my staff the most is that it often takes the people we are helping a long time to get us the information we need in order to assist them. We get very frustrated at that. I can tell you that we also get frustrated as well with the movement of the definitions of some of the constituents who approach us with their situations. So I can sympathize with that.

What is the situation in those areas—there are a lot—

**The Chair:** Mr. Calandra, you have to hurry. You're way over.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Am I over?

**The Chair:** Yes. How about we move on to Ms. Grewal?

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** No, you go ahead.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Can I go ahead? She is going to cede some time over to me.

She's enjoying the presentation so much that she has decided to let me go on.

• (1650)

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. That's fine, if you agree to that.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** In those areas where it's not easy for people to move around, it's not easy for security checks, or the mission might be far away and people don't have the resources to get to a mission, how can we do the process better? What do we do to make it easier for people in very difficult circumstances to get to us?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Some of the things we've put in place right now include the overseas visa application centres, which are mostly attached to the temporary visitor movement. In India, for example, we have a number of them. Apart from the two offices in Delhi and Chandigarh, we also have visa application centres throughout the country, which means that applicants don't have to line up in our mission in Delhi. They can go to the visa application centre and get the application sent to us. As we move forward, we want to explore the possibility of using these centres to help us do interviews; people wouldn't necessarily have to come to the mission, but instead might be able to go to somewhere closer, and we could use that facility to help us to do interviews.

We are continuing to explore possibilities. We want to continue toward a situation in which fewer interviews would be necessary because our criteria and our policy would be more evidence-based, and therefore in countries where the documentation existed to show that they met the criteria, we could expend fewer resources and focus those resources in other places.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Do I have more time?

**The Chair:** If you're using her time, you have lots of time.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Then I'd like to talk about fraud. Let's go a little bit further into some of the things that we're seeing on fraud and how we're starting to deal with some of the occurrences. I know we talked a bit about fraudulent documents earlier, and about how incredibly realistic they are in some areas. I bring this up only because a constituent of mine brought in a support letter to me that their relative had received from my office before I was actually elected, and it was remarkable. It had my signature, and, as I say, I wasn't actually the MP at the time, so somebody had obviously made a mistake.

How are we starting to deal with that, and how are we doing with identifying fraud? As well, you may have mentioned organized crime and how people are getting access to funds, which has to be a very big problem in certain areas of the world. How are we doing on that front?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** We're putting a lot of effort into that. I think one of the things that we continue to want to do is make sure that our focus is on what is absolutely necessary. That's why we have worked very hard to integrate operations, because if documents are being used in one application in one country but then they decide to apply somewhere else, we need to make sure that the information is available throughout.

We've got a strategy, and again it's based on—I'm sounding like a broken record—rolling out global case management, which will permit us to do more. We have an anti-fraud and program integrity group that is looking at our entire lines of business from one continuum to another. We used to do a lot on visitors and immigrants. We're doing much more now on citizenship, and now we need to learn how to do that. We work with CBSA much more. Overseas we're targeting with the RCMP and local authorities to do

more active prosecution that can be used to get our message out. We certainly are doing a lot more using the Internet in terms of providing advice. We are looking much more to providing self-service to clients so that they can apply without help, because sometimes help can be helpful and other times it can be constructing a file for them. We're going at it in many different ways at the moment.

**The Chair:** Thank you. That concludes the second round.

I have one quick question. Can you tell us the top five cities for long wait times around the world?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Do you mean for family class?

**The Chair:** Yes, and if you could get them in order, that would be good too, but they don't have to be in order. If you don't have it, we can make that a fourth undertaking.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I may not give them in order, but I'll give you the top five. For spouses, partners, and children in 2009, with 80% of applications finalized, the top five were, at 21 months, Accra; 29 months, Nairobi; 21 months, Guatemala; 19 months, Port-au-Prince; and 19 months, Kiev.

• (1655)

**The Chair:** I think that's five.

Thank you.

Monsieur Coderre.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** I hope that it has been speeded up in Port-au-Prince now. It was 19 months.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** It's coming along.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Don't tell me that, we will be inviting you back.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** In that case, it's not coming.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Earlier, you opened a door for me. There is a reality with regard to temporary visas. When a mother wants to be there when her daughter has a baby, because the daughter needs help, the mother may have trouble obtaining a temporary visa. Quite often, people will say that she will want to stay here.

For the benefit of those listening—and tens of thousands are listening to us today—I would like you to give us a rule to go by. Unfortunately, all too often with regard to visa applications, the answer is not "yes, but", but rather "no, but". In other words, getting a visa is almost the exception to the rule. That is my first question.

My second question concerns seniors. I think that in an aging society, the seniors issue becomes extremely relevant. Earlier, you said that we could give a visa to seniors. Unfortunately, there is a political reality tied to health. You know that, in some provinces, if a person comes here, it may entail costs. The older one is, the greater the risk of getting sick, the greater the risk of the province and the country clawing back funds even if there is insurance. It may not be politically correct to ask this question, but are there levels of tolerance? Do you pay more attention to various aspects? For example, an individual of a certain age compared to another might be more difficult to let in. Is there age-based profiling?

In my opinion, these are two issues we should examine closely.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I will answer the first question. However, I am not sure that I will be able to answer your second. I might ask Régnald Gilbert, our general director for the international region to answer that question.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** We know Mr. Gilbert well.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** With regard to the first question, here is what I mentioned. Once a sponsorship application has been made, in Mississauga, for example, we consider issuing multiple entry visas for parents and grandparents.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** These people could do what we call an "in land".

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Exactly. We know that these people will perhaps want to settle here permanently, but they are applying in a system where there is a waiting period. If there is no sponsorship or if the family in Canada is not in a position to sponsor that individual, then it becomes a matter of good faith. Do we believe that the individual wants to come here temporarily and will that person want to then go home?

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** So, people are at the mercy of the immigration officer who meets with that person.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** It is done on a case-by-case basis. The officer will make a decision.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** However, it remains arbitrary. People are human, as they say. It is in such cases that abuses or fraud can occur. So there needs to be a system.

There are two realities. The first is someone who wants to come and who will do anything to come. The second is an individual who sees the potential for fraud and who may blackmail people waiting for visas. I hope that this is not the case, but—

**Mme Claudette Deschênes:** I don't believe this is a problem.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** There is no problem there. Okay.

Now let's talk about age-based profiling—I have just invented a new concept! Mr. Gilbert, what do you think about it?

• (1700)

**Mr. Régnald Gilbert (Director General, International Region, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Good day. My name is Régnald Gilbert. I am the Regional Director for the International Region. There is no age-based profiling as such. However, when we know that someone is coming for a long-term visit, more than six months, for example, we often ask for a medical exam. For example, we can think of a mother coming to visit her

pregnant daughter—as you mentioned earlier—or to care for a young child. Other than those exceptions—where the answer is usually a positive one, because the person can come in most cases—there is very little difference in the case of people aged 50, 60 or 80.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Do you have the statistics on the acceptance rates?

**Mr. Régnald Gilbert:** Not by age group. They would need to be created. I do not think that we have that data.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. St-Cyr.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** In my previous question, I talked about ensuring a balance between the quotas, the wait times and the selection criteria. I was interrupted, I ran out of time, but in the meantime, Mr. Young drew a parallel with health care. This may allow me to clarify my thought to some extent because, in my mind, there is a difference.

In health care, the quota, the number of people to be processed, is a natural factor. There are a certain number of people who are sick, and the resources are then allocated. Based on the allocation or non-allocation of resources, there is a waiting period. However, it seems to me that with regard to immigration, the situation is not the same. There is an artificially set, predetermined quota. In order to reach that quota, in order to process the number of applications corresponding to the quota, a certain timeframe is required and the resources are allocated as a result.

Here is my point. The committee needs to understand that there are political choices that need to be made. You are not the ones making those choices. It will be the minister and Parliament. However, inevitably, there is a three-pillared approach. If we maintain the fixed quota and we reduce the processing time, we will have to tighten the selection criteria and vice versa. If we maintain the same selection criteria and we reduce the processing time, the quota will have to be increased, and so forth.

However, if we significantly reduce the processing time, which is a goal that must be attained, could this have an impact on the number of applications submitted? I would like your answer. Because there are people who want to go to different parts of the world—for example emigrant investors—and the time they have to wait to get an answer can have, in my opinion, an impact on their selecting Canada or another country.

Do you also believe that this is a criterion that will have an impact on whether someone applies or not? So, if we significantly reduce the waiting time, could this lead to an increase in the number of applications?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I am not going to immediately answer your question but I will come back to it. Again, if we really want to reduce the waiting time, we could say that we will accept a certain number of applications each year and that after that, we will accept others the following year, but we will not accept more than we can process. That is based on a certain percentage.

With regard to the processing times and the selection of Canada, this question applies above all to investors. With regard to the family class, people want to be reunited with their families. Historically, we haven't seen what you suggest. People still want to apply to come. Obviously, our processing times are not as good as we would like them to be, for investors, but the number of applications continues to increase.

So, there is something in the program they find attractive. Is it to come to live in Canada? Is it something else? We don't know.

• (1705)

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Have we ever examined the profile of these investors? Are there such individuals who are concerned about the length of the wait time? The most promising investors have the possibility of going to another country with shorter processing times. This means that those who come to Canada, who agree to wait longer, may perhaps be less interesting. Is this not a risk?

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** Yes, it's always a risk. We hear these kinds of complaints often with regard to investors. Obviously, having to wait four or five years is not what anyone wants, but as Ms. Deschênes said, some will—

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** They will come anyway.

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** Yes.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** I would like to ask you a question about the fact that a large part of the process is undertaken abroad, in the embassies. I have already asked this question. Why do we not do more of it in Canada? You told me that there were things that could only be done locally and that it was more efficient to do it locally.

However, it seems that, in this day and age, given the availability of electronic computerized systems, this is becoming less and less true. I recently had the opportunity to meet with the ambassador of Madagascar in Canada. He told me that, frankly, sending a file to Nairobi or Canada made little difference to the people there. I do not know what our Nairobi officers know about the situation in Madagascar or in other countries. Africa is not a single homogeneous entity. There are differences. So, is it a will to locally repatriate—

[English]

**The Chair:** You're well over time, Monsieur St-Cyr.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Do you want an answer?

**The Chair:** Sure.

[Translation]

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Yes, that is what we are currently testing with regard to the Skilled Worker Centralized Intake Office in Sydney and north of Port-au-Prince. If someone living in Madagascar has to have an interview, it is less expensive from Nairobi. The individual can go to Nairobi or vice versa. There are indeed many things that we can do in Canada. We talk here about the back office and the front office. That is what we are currently planning with the GCMS framework.

[English]

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

Ms. Chow, you have questions, do you not?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Yes. I'll go back to where I left off, which was about learning from the Immigration Appeal Division.

Would you be able to give provide us with an analysis or evaluation of cases that have been overturned, such as refusals in spousal cases, if there were a whole batch of such decisions being overturned, especially in some Asian countries?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Again, that's a bit like comparing apples and oranges, but we've done a bit of a—

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** It's the same family, though.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Yes, but it's a *de novo* application. If you have 18 months to demonstrate that you've created a relationship, even I could create one. It doesn't mean that the initial decision that it wasn't a bona fide relationship was wrong. It simply means that 18 months after the initial decision, you've been able to create enough of a relationship. Either it's bona fide now, or maybe it wasn't then. However, it doesn't necessarily tie together that because you refused it once, and the IAD overturned it, that it is correct.

We've done a bit of an analysis of that. It didn't give us exactly what we needed, but we certainly could share the analysis with you to show you some of the complexities involved. One of the things we face is that we don't have all the resources we need to do all of the analysis. Of course, it doesn't serve much purpose to us to refuse a case that, in the end, is a bona fide case, because all we would be doing then is processing the case twice—albeit I'm not saying we never make a mistake.

I really want to clarify that an overturned decision at the IAD does not mean that the first decision was wrong.

• (1710)

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** On the first decision, you said that the couple was not real. If the couple were not real, why would they stay or live together for two more years, and then maybe by that time had one or two kids, whatever?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Maybe I'll give you the example of a case where—

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Just allow me to finish. Hang on a second.

I've seen cases where there are children involved. The couple has kids and yet is still turned down. Okay, you can say that it must be a marriage of convenience, but here's a kid, a child, who has been born of a marriage. You can say it might be a marriage of convenience and it gets turned down by the CIC, and then the couple appeal. The appeal procedure takes two years also. So they've already waited for a year and a half, they get turned down, and then the appeal takes another two years. Then the whole thing starts again.

Why wouldn't you take the appeal division's decision and say we don't need a second interview—because by that time it would be the third interview—and then just process it? If the appeal division says it's fine, that it's genuine, then you just issue the visa.

Instead, what's happening now is that they wait for a while, they get the appeal, and then wait for another six months or so before they can actually come. I've seen couples that end up being separated for four or five years. Imagine the hardship for that child, who is either staying with the dad or the mom and thus missing a mom or a dad for four or five of his or her formative years. That is absolutely insane, to my mind.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I'll comment that we normally don't re-interview. What they do have to do is security and medical screening.

I'll also refer you to at least two cases before the courts where we actually refused a marriage of convenience, but they won at the IAD. The sponsorship broke down when they arrived in Canada, because it was a marriage of convenience. We're being taken to court because we should have known it was a marriage of convenience. So I think there are many cases in which we can always find an exception—

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Can you provide the number of spousal cases IAD has overturned, and provide it according to visa offices overseas? Can you break that down?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** We'll provide you with whatever information is actually available.

**The Chair:** That is undertaking number four.

Dr. Wong and Mr. Young are sharing five minutes.

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In your presentation you mentioned organized crime a number of times. You mentioned incidents in certain places where the CIC office has found there's organized crime involving spousal sponsorship. Is it possible to elaborate a little bit on that, or are you unable to list the details for security reasons? I've been to the Hong Kong office and I was told the same thing.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I would just say that when I talk about organized crime, it's an organized network matching Canadian sponsors or people living in Canada as permanent residents with people who want to come to Canada, either just because they want to emigrate to Canada or for other reasons. The network is organizing the relationship.

Rénald, is there anything else?

**Mr. Régnald Gilbert:** No, but I can add that it's probably more the exception than the rule. In terms of marriages of convenience, what we see are more one-off. There's an agreement between families or between individuals. Organized crime cases for a spousal sponsorship may not be good business, because of the length of time to a certain extent, but what we found out from our office in Hong Kong is that, especially in the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, there were groups that were organized to do exactly that. I would say it's not the norm with regard to spousal sponsorship, but it's certainly the case there.

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** In that case, it would take a longer time to process this to make sure that we won't allow that to happen.

• (1715)

**Mr. Régnald Gilbert:** Yes, exactly. Once we found a certain number of cases that had the same pattern, each time we saw another

case that fitted exactly the same thing, we were more cautious, of course.

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** Thank you.

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Some of those applications require you to do site visits. One of the ways to actually demonstrate and write up the case and refuse it so that it can go to the IAD is to have a site visit and be able to demonstrate even further that this is not making sense.

**Mrs. Alice Wong:** Thank you.

I will let my colleague go ahead.

**Mr. Terence Young:** In the early 1900s my father's mother and father emigrated from Ireland, and then they had to go back to care for a sick relative.

I'm still trying to get this ideal waiting time thing worked out in my mind. I'm thinking of all the reasons that family class immigrants, who are not in a position of desperation, as refugees are, might put off travelling, or what might make them not worry about waiting 12 months, if that's the ideal time. They may want to sell a house or a car. They might save more money, finish a project, or say goodbye to friends. The birth of a baby might put off their ideal travel time; they might have to take care of a sick relative or have a medical procedure. I'm trying to understand the push and pull on this. I think we're sometimes assuming that everybody's waiting with their bags packed, ready to go, and that's not true. I think you might be being too hard on yourself.

I want to ask you about the immigrant investor class, because it says here that in 2008 immigrants invested over \$550 million after the number of cases processed annually went from 1,000 to 2,000 in 2007.

If that went up to 10,000, say, it appears to me that the potential is billions of dollars worth of investment. Is that correct?

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** Yes. In round numbers, if you multiply the number of cases out there by the \$400,000 they're required to invest, it comes to several billion dollars.

**Mr. Terence Young:** You say it's fairly open: if these people were accepted to emigrate to Canada, these people who meet other criteria as well, there are potentially billions of dollars of investment.

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** There is that amount, potentially. I think we have to be careful with some of the withdrawal and refusal rates in that category as well. The source of the funds is always a concern with large sums of money and what not, but theoretically, yes, there's—

**Mr. Terence Young:** You mean some of them might be crooks or gangsters, and we don't want them, but other than that, there's big potential.

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Dryden.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** I have a quick question, but I don't know whether you're able to answer it.

Let's use Russia as the example again. People have made the application, and they're waiting. Is there anything they can do during that time in anticipation of coming to Canada? Can they prepare themselves? Are there materials? Are there programs? Is anything offered by our consular offices or embassy offices to help those people? Maybe after a month or two it becomes clear that they are going to be accepted down the line, so can they can start to prepare themselves for arrival in Canada? Do we do that?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** There are a number of things available, and we're continuing to work on providing more support. In some countries, there are already programs that the Canadian government is providing through service providers.

One of the key things we're doing presently is at the foreign credentials referral office, which is all about setting up more information for prospective immigrants who have decided they want to come to Canada. So it validates that you really do want to come and that you're going to be able to work and what qualifications of yours need to be recognized so you can work in Canada. Then, once you've been accepted to come to Canada, it's about providing the additional support needed.

Right now we've set up this support in India, China, the Philippines, and we're about to do so in London to cover the Gulf states. You can get support in these places to prepare for a job search in Canada and to make sure your credentials are recognized. By the time you get to Canada, you're then set and ready to start finding work. So that is starting to roll out.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Are you able to meet the demand for that now in those places—not the places you're about to move into, but those places where you already are? Is this an initial process you're ramping up to try to meet the capacity required, or are you at that capacity level already?

• (1720)

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** No, it's being run as a pilot project with the ACCC. We're just ramping up. Right now we're focusing on federal skilled workers, but we want to expand it to provincial nominees. We also want to use the Internet so we can do more of that and those tools are available for people to use.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** I want to come back to investors.

Quebec has a good program, without a doubt. This is true with regard to the other provinces. Be that as it may, what has always concerned me is the case of people who come to invest, but who, ultimately, come for an address rather than anything else.

Are there preventative measures to ensure that these are really immigrant investors?

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** I do not understand your question.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** You do not understand? Let me slowly rephrase my question.

In Quebec, there is a framework. A certain amount of money is provided, and there is a program that is tied to that. However, we have in the past heard rumours that people who supposedly were immigrating as investors really wanted to have an address in order to come and settle here. This is a roundabout way of immigrating.

Have you put in place preventative measures to ensure that these people are really coming here to invest, in other words that they are not simply coming to settle here?

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** The investment is made before the visa is issued, therefore prior to the arrival of the individual in Canada.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** So someone verifies that the money has already been invested, and so forth.

I understood that, for economic reasons, there are major regional centres, but economically-speaking, things have in the meantime changed somewhat. Do you want to open other centres?

I sometimes find that in this connection, Africa is a poor relative. Do you intend to open other offices? I am thinking in particular of the Maghreb region, and the reality which is increasingly important there with regard to francophone immigration. I would like to know whether other offices might be opened, for the reason mentioned earlier by my friend Mr. St-Cyr concerning Nairobi and Madagascar. This was done back in the day in Chandigarh, which is in another region.

Does Immigration Canada want to open other offices, particularly in North Africa?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** Today, we are unable to open other offices, but we are currently developing how we will use our system. Using the GCMS and biometrics, we might perhaps opt for smaller offices but in more locations, rather than larger offices, keeping those for Canada.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur St-Cyr.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** What you're proposing is extremely interesting. In fact that is to some extent what I was trying to say previously when I was interrupted. My introduction was very long. Sovereignists are sometimes given to very long preambles.

With regard to immigrant investors in Quebec, there are often comments, if not to say frustrations, concerning the difficulty of tying the selection done in Quebec to the verification which is done in Ottawa. This concerns, among other things, the issue of the source of the funding and ensuring that there be no money laundering or money from other illicit activities. Applicants often feel they are doing the same thing twice. We are asking them to do the same thing twice, but not necessarily in the same way, which is extremely frustrating. At the same time, from a systemic perspective, it seems there is a costly duplication for taxpayers.

Have you recently put in place mechanisms to reduce this kind of frustration and duplication?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** I believe that this is something we are aware of and that we are working on. Obviously, the issue of the source of funds is extremely important and this is a federal responsibility. So, we are doing these kinds of investigations. I believe that Quebec also wants to know where the funds are coming from. So we continue to negotiate with them and if they accept our decision, it will be much quicker.

The issue is, at some point, to have the same forms and to ensure that people can get them quickly. With regard to investors, we are looking at making decisions to ensure there is no duplication. However, we want to do the work that we are responsible for doing as the federal government.

• (1725)

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** So, when these people tell us that, initially, Ottawa is the one complaining that Quebec is not conducting sufficient checks about the source of the funds, if I understand correctly, this is not true. You are not asking the Government of Quebec to verify the source of the funds. You are taking the selection certificate. You have that responsibility.

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** I would like to answer in English.

[English]

It's in Quebec's best interests to do the best job they can on the source of funds. So, yes, they do a lot of work towards verifying the source of funds.

Refusals down the road at the federal level involve a cost to the Quebec government, so it's obviously within their best interests to ensure that the cases that come to us have as high a chance of success as possible. So they do devote a significant amount of work to looking at the source of funds.

That being said, as Madame Deschênes has said, we still have a responsibility at the federal level. We can't simply get out of that

responsibility for source of funds and admissibility, but we are working together to see what checks they're doing up front and how we can work on that process.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** What percentage of applications from Quebec are refused by the federal government because the source of funds is unacceptable?

**Ms. Heidi Smith:** I do not have the exact percentage, but it is very low. I believe it is approximately 2% or 3%.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Is the duplication really worth it? Could we not simply ask Quebec to ensure that these 2% do not get through and rely solely on what is being done by Quebec?

**Ms. Claudette Deschênes:** If we could make sure that this 2% would not be referred to us, we could do that, but I am not convinced. It is clearly the federal government's responsibility. I think that we should coordinate our forms and processes to try to reduce the time it takes to go from one to the other. This is something we want to do. With regard to timeframes, often a file is waiting on a shelf before it is seen by an officer. Here again, it is because there are too many applications compared to the number of individuals that can be accepted each year. You should not forget that in the vast majority of cases, investors from Quebec will not settle in Quebec.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay. I think we're finished.

Thank you very much, Madame Deschênes and your colleagues, for coming once again. We may need you before the end of the study. If not, we'll probably see you with the bill. We're looking forward to that.

The meeting is adjourned.

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