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Chair

Mr. David Tilson

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• (0850)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

This is the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. Our orders of the day, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), are for a study of immigration application process wait times.

We have four witnesses today; four guests from around the world, it seems.

I want to thank you all for coming. This is a topic that the committee has been working on for some time. We even contemplated going to some of your offices.

I'm going to introduce the four of you from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration: Rénaud Gilbert, director general, international region; Micheline Aucoin, immigration program manager in Manila and area director for southeast Asia; Sidney Frank, immigration program manager in Beijing and area director for north Asia; and David Manicom, immigration program manager in New Delhi and area director for south Asia.

I apologize if I pronounced some of your names incorrectly. You can correct me later.

We have two hours. I know that committee members have a number of questions.

What we hoped, Mr. Gilbert, was that if you could speak for a couple of minutes, the other guests would have up to 10 minutes each to speak on the problems in their particular areas.

I want to welcome you and thank you for coming and helping us. It's a topic that the committee is most concerned about and is continuing to work on.

Mr. Gilbert, you have the floor.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert (Director General, International Region, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Good morning. My name is Rénaud Gilbert, and I am the Director General of the International Region of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

I would like to thank the committee for its interest in hearing from representatives of some of our visa offices abroad. Before the

remarks of my colleagues from overseas, I would like to very briefly provide some general context.

I understand the committee's particular interest in the six visa offices relates to processing times for permanent residence applications, especially for family class and investor cases.

I would like to set the stage by saying that, while we recognize that there is always room for improvement, efforts have been made to improve processing times within the limits established by immigration levels.

[*English*]

A number of factors influence processing times at each of these offices. For instance, while priority family class cases are processed without a limit on numbers, investor and non-priority family class applications are subject to annual targets, which do have a significant impact on processing times. Secondly, resource allocation, particularly having the right level of resources in the right place at the right time, is always a challenge. Thirdly, there are competing priorities for resources from other lines of business and from temporary resident application volumes.

I would also underline that, while visa offices have many processing issues and challenges in common, there is also considerable diversity given the broad range of countries and clientele served. The importance of local context means that processes and practices that are successful in one place may not be so effective in another, and this should be kept in mind before making direct comparisons between offices.

[*Translation*]

My three colleagues here today, in addition to being immigration program managers of three of our largest foreign offices, are also area directors collectively responsible for all visa offices in the Asia-Pacific region. I invite you to put to them directly any questions you may have that are specific to their offices or regions, but I would also be pleased to answer any questions you may have that relate to the visa office network as a whole.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for your introductory comments, sir.

We will now have the other witnesses speak.

Madame Aucoin, for 10 minutes please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Micheline Aucoin (Immigration Program Manager (Manila), Area Director (Southeast Asia), Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am honoured to be here today before the committee. My name is Micheline Aucoin, and I am the Immigration Program Manager in Manila, and Area Director for Southeast Asia.

I understand that you have a particular interest in processing times in the family and investor categories. I will therefore provide information on these topics in the context of Manila's operations.

As Rénaud mentioned, Manila is a large centre for both permanent and temporary migration. The office covers a large territory of Pacific islands, although in practice, the vast majority of the applications we receive are from the Philippines.

To give you an idea of the size of our program, on the temporary side, we receive some 30,000 applications per year for temporary visitor's visas, with processing times which are steadily improving.

We also have flexibility for same-day service for emergency cases. We also receive a large number of applications for temporary work permits, and this number tends to fluctuate with the health of the Canadian labour market. For example, the number of such applications had almost doubled to about 28,000 in 2008, only to drop off by half the following year and further in 2010.

The 2009-10 drop allowed us to not only reduce our inventory and processing times significantly — we now process most temporary foreign worker applications in four weeks —, but to also reallocate resources to other programs with high needs, including priority family class.

We also have a sizeable live-in caregiver program, and we are making significant inroads in reducing inventories and processing times in that category.

With respect to permanent migration, we issued more than 27,000 permanent resident visas last year. Of note is the large increase in the provincial nominee program in Manila over the last few years. Almost 10,000 visas were issued in that category in 2010, the vast majority processed in less than a year.

We have also been able to process the vast majority of our skilled worker applications received after November 2008 —the so-called Bill C-50 cases — within a year and have started to make a dent in our pre-Bill C-50 federal skilled worker inventory.

We still have 45,000 persons in that inventory and are working to reduce it, subject to competing priorities and availability of resources. Manila sees a large and increasing number of applications from dependent family members of live-in caregivers in Canada. For the second year in a row, we issued 6,000 visas in that category in 2010, and yet saw another growth in our inventory.

In the family class category, we issued more than 4,000 visas last year, and I am pleased to say that processing times for priority cases, that is for spouses, partners and children, were at nine months last year, well within the departmental service standards.

That being said, we still have almost 2,000 persons in process in our priority family class, and we are determined to do better.

We have looked at each step in our process to determine if there were ways to cut time and steps that could be eliminated altogether for some low-risk cases. We have made changes that allow some of the cases to be processed in a matter of a few months. There are challenges that are particular to Manila, including the fact that divorce is not available in the Philippines. But there are also factors that should help Manila process applications in a timelier manner than other missions, including the fact that the majority of our applicants are from the Philippines and can relatively easily come to Manila for an interview.

● (0855)

[*English*]

For parents, grandparents, and other family class applications, we have an inventory of some 4,000 persons, and our processing times are about two and a half years. We recognize the inconvenience that this may cause, and are showing flexibility in issuing visitor visas to parents and grandparents who are waiting for their immigration application to be finalized.

The role that family reunification plays in the movement we see out of Manila is not limited to the family class. A good example is the 6,000 visas we issued last year to dependent family members of the live-in caregivers already in Canada. In addition, many of our applicants under the provincial nominee program have extended-family members in Canada.

Equally, on the temporary side, many of our applicants under the live-in caregiver program are going to work for extended family members in Canada. And many of our temporary visitor visas are issued to Filipinos who want to visit family members in Canada.

I know that you are interested to hear about the investors program. In Manila, however, we receive only a very small number of applications under this program—less than 20 last year for federal investors and less than five for Quebec. We currently have about 100 investor cases in our inventory.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, Manila is in a good position to deliver on its commitments this year again and to further reduce processing times in key categories. However, in a program as large as Manila's, with important fluctuations in some categories, we need to always be prepared to prioritize and reallocate resources as need be, to constantly review our internal procedures to find more efficiencies, and to provide better service to our clients. This is what we are doing and will continue to do.

In addition to efforts at the local level, CIC is developing important tools, such as the global case management system, the famous GCMS, and an electronic suite of services, which will have a tremendously positive impact on our work abroad. I will not expand on these except to say that Manila has had GCMS for three months now and already we see the enormous potential in terms of processing efficiencies, redistribution of work, and tracking of cases.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

● (0900)

The Chair: Thank you.

I might add that members of the committee had actually contemplated travelling to where you work, in the past, but because of the recession and economic reasons, we decided against that. So it's very great that you're all here today.

Mr. Frank, you have up to 10 minutes, sir.

Mr. Sidney Frank (Immigration Program Manager (Beijing), Area Director (North Asia), Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank the committee for inviting me to speak.

My name is Sidney Frank, and I'm the immigration program manager in Beijing and area director for north Asia.

I'd like to provide a short overview of the program in Beijing, emphasizing topics that I believe are of most interest to the committee.

One of the largest visa offices in Canada's overseas network, Beijing has close to 100 staff. As a regional program centre, Beijing oversees satellite offices in Shanghai, which handles temporary resident applications from four Chinese provinces, and in Guangzhou, which handles the migration integrity program in southern China.

Hong Kong is responsible for family class applications from southern China, and has jointly handled all economic category applications from China in conjunction with Beijing since the mid-1990s.

I'm certain you're all aware that in spite of the current worldwide economic downturn, China continues to demonstrate near double-digit growth. With a growing middle class, increasing numbers of Chinese are able to travel, study, and do business abroad. In 2010, 151,647 temporary resident visas were issued to Chinese nationals to visit Canada. Over half of those visas were issued in Beijing.

[*Translation*]

Canada was granted Approved Destination Status, or ADS, during the Prime Minister's visit in December 2009, and the first ADS groups travelled to Canada in August 2010. Last year, 6,540 tourists travelled to China as part of ADS groups and a similar number travelled to Canada on their own. We anticipate that the number of tourists destined for Canada will increase more rapidly this coming summer. We have been working with Chinese travel agencies recommended by the Canadian Tourism Commission to handle these tourist groups.

[*English*]

A significant portion of the Chinese population has not benefited from economic growth. Consequently, strong push factors for migration remain, and fraud and misrepresentation are widespread. Canada continues to be an attractive destination for illegal Chinese migrants and for economic criminals who target our temporary and permanent resident programs to gain entry to Canada.

In spite of high levels of fraud, 84% of temporary resident applicants were approved in 2010. For business visitors the acceptance rate was 89%. Refusals are extremely rare for business persons who work for state-owned enterprises, a significant proportion of our business visitors. The service we provide is comparable to or better than Australia, the United States, or the United Kingdom, with 66% of our private business visitors processed the day after receipt in our office. Visa application centres in four major cities in China make the application process more convenient for private visitors, tourists, business travellers, students, or temporary workers.

In 2010 Beijing issued 17,195 study permits, making China the largest source of foreign students for Canada. The student program continues to grow at a rapid pace, with a 17% increase in applications in 2010 compared to the previous year, and more than double the number received in 2005. The student program is expected to continue to grow through the recent expansion to China of the student partners program, the SPP, between CIC and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges.

With the introduction of optional up-front medicals that allow a student to undertake the medical examinations prior to the submission of an application, processing times have dropped significantly. Approximately 67% of the applicants now take advantage of this new procedure. Of these cases, 80% are processed within 13 days, compared to eight weeks in 2008 prior to the procedure's introduction.

High levels of fraud and misrepresentation in the student program mean that considerable resources must be devoted to the assessment of these applications. Students comprise 33% of our refusals for fraud. Nevertheless, we have managed to maintain a relatively high acceptance rate of 75% to 80% for students over the past few years without a negative impact on program integrity.

● (0905)

[*Translation*]

China has been the number one source of immigrants to Canada for more than a decade. As I have explained, Beijing shares the processing of permanent resident applications submitted by Chinese nationals with our mission in Hong Kong. In 2010, Beijing issued 9,391 visas, about 59% of the total issued by Hong Kong.

At the end of 2010, Beijing had an inventory of 9,034 permanent resident cases, declining from 12,646 cases in 2008, a drop of over 7,000 persons. This can be attributed to the transfer of 1,500 Bill C-50 skilled worker cases, which were not eligible under ministerial instructions, to the Centralized Intake Office in Sydney for finalization, and to the fact that there were more cases finalized than applications received.

[English]

The number of skilled worker applications received in Beijing and Hong Kong declined dramatically after IRPA came into effect. The higher language requirements imposed by IRPA and the increasing ability of the Chinese economy to provide well-paid employment to highly skilled workers contributed to this decline. With the implementation of Bill C-50, skilled worker intake has declined further.

We are aware that consultants are promoting the investor programs in China as an alternative to the more restrictive ministerial instructions of the Bill C-50 skilled worker category. Current real estate values in first- and second-tier cities in China make it relatively easy for many of China's middle class to meet the new minimum net worth requirement of the investor category.

Unlike Hong Kong, which has seen huge increases in investor applications prior to the introduction of the new regulations regarding the investor category, the business intake in Beijing declined by 26% in 2009 compared to the previous year, with 355 cases received. In 2010, intake increased by 9% with 386 applications received. Among business categories, Beijing gives priority to investors. Between 2004 and 2009, processing times for 80% of federal and Quebec investors went from 47 to 30 months.

A significant portion of our business caseload is comprised of wealthy applicants claiming to have made very large sums of money during a period in China's economic development when this would have been an exceedingly rare accomplishment. Even rarer is the verifiable paper trail that would establish their wealth was legally obtained. It has proven very difficult under these circumstances to differentiate between legitimate businessmen and those who obtained their wealth illegally.

Beijing's family class unit handles a large volume of sponsored spouses and dependent children. With a high risk of marriages of convenience, approximately 33% of applicants are interviewed. Nevertheless, 80% of cases are completed within four months from when the sponsorship is received at the case processing centre in Mississauga.

During our low season for temporary residents, we shift resources to permanent resident processing, enabling us to process spousal applications as quickly as one month from their receipt in our office. Approximately 85% of applications assessed in 2010 were accepted. Targets for sponsored parents and grandparents are managed globally. Current processing time for this category in Beijing is 37 months for 80% of cases.

For many years, Beijing has been a centre of innovation, using information technology to reduce the clerical work required to process applications. I am pleased to advise you that these innovations have been incorporated into our new global case

management system, whose implementation abroad began at the end of June 2010. GCMS is scheduled to be implemented in Beijing at the end of this month.

I wish to assure you that the team in China is committed to the expeditious processing of all types of cases while protecting Canada from those persons who should be denied entry.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you.

● (0910)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Frank.

Our final witness to speak is Mr. Manicom, who goes to New Delhi from time to time.

[Translation]

Mr. David Manicom (Immigration Program Manager (New Delhi), Area Director (South Asia), Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the committee for inviting me to speak.

My name is David Manicom, and I am Program Manager of the New Delhi visa office, and Area Director for South Asia. I would like to provide a short overview emphasizing topics which I understand are of most interest to the committee.

New Delhi is Canada's largest visa office, with over 150 staff. We are responsible for delivery of the immigration program in India, Nepal and Bhutan. A satellite office in Chandigarh processes temporary residence applications, primarily from the states of Punjab and Haryana. We operate a network of visa application centres in nine major Indian cities and in Nepal, to facilitate the handling of temporary resident applications. Over 90% of applicants choose to use these centres. On an average business day, we render decisions on over 500 applications —more than one per minute.

While I understand temporary resident programs are not of most direct interest to the committee at this time, I do want to spend a moment on this topic, as it is important to understand the overall operation in Delhi, and how resources are managed.

As has been the case for China, India has barely been affected by the world economic crisis, and its economic growth has continued at a rapid pace. Thus, our visitor, study permit and work permit programs have grown very rapidly in the past decade, roughly tripling in size. This pattern continued in 2010 with an increase of about 20% over 2009 volumes. New Delhi assessed over 93,000 temporary resident applications last year, and will receive over 1,000 passports on peak days.

The program is highly seasonal. Intake in spring is more than triple that in January. We cross-train officers and inject resources from the immigrant units in order to remain current on all temporary resident business lines at all times. Doing so reduces the non-value added work generated by delays, and over time preserves the maximum amount of resources for immigrant processing. It does mean, however, that our unit, which processes skilled workers and investors, will have 13 or so officers in the winter, but only six in the summer.

[English]

Delhi does high-volume processing in a high-potential value-added but high-risk environment, where fraud is endemic. To deal with that situation, we have developed several innovative programs where we work closely with stakeholders to manage risk and facilitate low-risk travellers.

For example, our business express program, in cooperation with about 55 large and reliable firms doing regular business in Canada, provides simplified documentation, 24- to 48-hour processing, and an approval rate of over 98%. We think that's important to help Canada meet its objective of dramatically increasing trade with India as India evolves into an economic global power. By streaming these applications separately, we also realize internal efficiencies, conserving our resources for in-depth review of higher-risk cases.

Our student partners program, inaugurated in New Delhi in 2009, and now with 40 participating community colleges, has succeeded in significantly improving approval rates, quadrupling application volumes and permits issued, while managing risk through stricter documentation and feedback information on actual attendance by the schools.

In each of our temporary resident business lines, processing times are falling and are faster than the global norm. For example, 88% of all visitor visa applications are finalized within one week, and over a third of them within two days.

With regard to permanent residents, India has been Canada's second-largest source of permanent residents in recent years. New Delhi issued over 25,000 permanent resident visas last year. New Delhi has by far Canada's largest family class program and also, unfortunately, the largest inventory of economic category applications.

New Delhi issues about 20% of the global family class visas each year. In our priority category, spouses and dependent children, we finalize 80% of cases within six months and the median is four months.

In the parents and grandparents category, output is managed globally. We process sufficient cases each year to meet the objective assigned to the office. Current processing time at the office is 30 months. This does not include sponsorship time at CPC Mississauga.

The primary challenge in the sponsored spouses program is determining whether or not marriages are genuine. Marriages of convenience are common. However, the large majority of marriages are genuine, with about 85% being approved. The majority of cases do not require interviews. However, we provide extensive training to our officers on local law and custom, and if questions about marriages of convenience arise, officers do lengthy interviews to

attempt to ensure there is a genuine relationship. We schedule interviews shortly after receiving the applications so that even cases requiring an interview are not significantly delayed.

With regard to sponsored parents and grandparents, the primary difficulty relates to the misrepresentation of dependent children. Many families in our caseload provide fraudulent documentation showing children are still full-time students, or add unrelated children to their files. As applicants are generally elderly, these cases are also frequently delayed by complex medical conditions.

New Delhi has the largest inventory of skilled worker cases submitted prior to the ministerial instructions. Significant progress was made in 2008-09 in reducing the pre-2008 inventory from over 140,000 persons to about 99,000 today, a decrease of over 30%. The processing time for these cases continues to lengthen, and was at 82 months in 2010. For all but a few months of that time, the cases are not in active process, but consume resources through managing correspondence. Owing to the number of new cases submitted under ministerial instructions, we processed few old inventory cases in 2010.

Indian nationals are the highest-volume applicants under the current ministerial instructions. At the present time, we are devoting all available resources to the quick processing of new cases received pursuant to Bill C-50. In 2010 we finalized 80% of all these cases within 10 months. Given the volume of intake under the first set of ministerial instructions, we will not be able to further reduce the inventory of older cases this year.

New Delhi issued over 11,900 skilled worker visas in 2010, an increase from about 8,300 in 2009.

● (0915)

I would also like to note that New Delhi is quickly becoming one of the major source countries for provincial nominee programs. This program was quite small in India until recently, but tripled in size between 2008 and 2010.

Finally, I understand that the committee has a particular interest in the federal investor program. This program was very small in New Delhi in the past, with few applications prior to 2007. Intake has increased significantly in the past two years. Given our very large skilled worker inventory, and the largest global family class program, we are not able yet to give a high priority to this new caseload. In 2010 we processed 80% of cases within 28 months, somewhat faster than the global average. We approved only about half of the cases in 2010.

We believe this recent increase is primarily due to the priority afforded to the investor applicants over other business immigration categories. The applicants are mainly small farmers with land-holdings of 10 acres or so. This profile of individual previously applied in the self-employed category, but as our processing in that category is much slower, they are shifting into the investor category. Due to the rising cost of land on the margins of major Indian cities, these small farmers, mainly in the Punjab, can now meet minimum net worth requirements, and normally have at least five farmhands to meet the minimum employee requirements.

The percentage of investor program applicants who are major business persons of high net worth is very small.

● (0920)

[Translation]

This is a quick *tour d'horizon* of just some of our programs. We are working hard to advance Canada's interests in India. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Manicom, and all of the presenters.

Members of the committee will now have some questions.

Mr. Trudeau.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

First of all, I'd like to look at the grandparents and the sponsorship of parents, and at the times. In Manila, Beijing, and New Delhi, in order, the wait times appear to be two and a half years; three years or so, about 37 months; and then two and a half years. That is, however, in addition to the processing times in Mississauga.

What is the processing time in Mississauga, on average, Monsieur Gilbert?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: The last data I had was that it was 40 months, but it has been increasing, since the number of applications received is larger than the target that we are allowed to do.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: We're talking about two and a half years over there, and about three and a half years, before that, over here, so it's around six years in total for the times right now.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: That's correct.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: The backlog in Manila for grandparent applications is about 4,000. This was what Madame Aucoin had said. In Beijing, what is the backlog for grandparents?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: It's slightly under 7,000.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: And in New Delhi?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: It's close to 12,000.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: How many of the parents and grandparents—that is, the non-priority family sponsorships—are accepted every year in the various areas?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: The number has varied from year to year, but for 2011 the target that was set for us was 11,200.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: In total.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: Yes, in total.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: But in each area, what is it?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: In the case of Beijing, currently it's 2,500. To be precise, we changed it slightly during the year. That was not the number at the beginning of the year. It was 2,650. Now it's 2,500.

In the case of New Delhi, it's 2,300, and in the case of Manila, 750.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Given that this new target is reduced from around 15,000 to now 11,000 and change, what impact will that have on those new targets?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: Those are the targets for 2011. Last year they were different.

For instance, we have increased substantially the target for Beijing, and we have decreased the one for Delhi—so my friend David is unhappy with me, and my friend Sid as well.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: I'm sorry, the 2,300 for New Delhi, for example, is under the current 11,000 target that you're operating.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: That's correct.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: So last year, for example, when we were at 15,000 for the year, what was the number?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: The number last year was 5,000.

● (0925)

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Okay.

And for Beijing last year it would have been lower. You were saying it was increased.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: It was lower.

Mr. Sidney Frank: It was 1,150.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: It was 1,150. And for Manila—it's 750 this year—it was....

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: Last year it was 1,175.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Okay.

In the case of New Delhi, for example, that's a significant decrease, more than half. What impact is that going to have on, first of all, the backlog of 12,000 people and the significant six-year total wait times? Wait times will go up, and the backlog will increase as well?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: That's correct.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Okay.

In the case of China, if we increase the numbers accepted per year, what kind of dent is that going to make in the 7,000 backlog?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: First, I should clarify that not all applications are approved.

So out of the 2,500...

I'm not sure what would be the percentage, but over 3,000 applications at some point will be reduced in Beijing.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Why has it been determined that India, for example, is not going to be receiving as many parent class applications? With the size of the backlog, I'm assuming there are lots of applications.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: There is the backlog and then there is the age of the backlog. So when I look at the older cases, those from before, say, 2008, the inventory in Beijing was larger than the one in New Delhi. So what we're trying to do is to finalize most of the older cases to try to reduce the difference from mission to mission. Currently in New Delhi it's 31 months, and in Beijing it's 37.

So what we're hoping to achieve over time is to have it be more even from one mission to the next. Those are two examples, but we have to do that for the 60-some missions where we have these targets.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: I understand that.

What is the average age of the parents and the grandparents in the application, in general?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: They would be in their late fifties or early sixties, but I don't have the data with me.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: One thing that was made reference to was a concern about fraud. Obviously, every mission has mechanisms to sort of stream out the fraudulent cases.

Other than what was mentioned in the case of New Delhi and the attendance feedback for student frauds, for example, what sort of monitoring is there of potential fraud cases or the cases that turn out to be fraudulent that slip through the system, and what sort of processes do we have in place around that?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: They are different from place to place, so maybe I could ask my colleagues to describe what's in their office.

Mr. David Manicom: It varies from category to category, of course, sir.

With regard to parents and grandparents, for example, local staff in the local office have a great deal of experience with the types of fraud that tend to be used.

When we have children in the upper end of the eligibility range and there's a very large gap in ages between siblings, or when we have children who seem to have remained in school long past the

normal best-before date, we will, for example, verify those documents. In some situations, we'll even require DNA tests. We use things like that.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: That's up front. What about—

The Chair: We've run out of time, Mr. Trudeau. I'm sorry.

Monsieur Dufour.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would simply like to say that I am going to be sharing my time with my colleague. Many thanks to the witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Gilbert, do you have a process that allows for the sharing of best practices between the various regional offices? Indeed, we have seen that the wait times can vary from one place to another.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: First of all, the wait times are not necessarily the result of best practices. As I indicated at the outset, because of the characteristics specific to the different offices, it sometimes happens that a best practice used in one centre cannot necessarily be applied in another. In certain regions — and this has been proven —, a good many clients have very similar backgrounds. The efficiency of the processing of these applications therefore varies from mission to mission. For example, in the Nairobi office, an officer may process applications from people originating from eight different countries in the course of one and the same day. It therefore varies.

We do hold meetings on occasion. As a matter of fact, my colleagues are here, by pure coincidence, for a meeting that starts tomorrow and will continue until Friday. During these meetings, we have a lot of discussions with regard to these best practices. During our monthly conference calls, we have similar discussions. We publish a bulletin on best modernization practices. We also speak with each other every day by telephone. Also, since our officers cross-post with colleagues, in other words move around from office to office, our best practices are transferred from office to office.

Mr. Frank, Mr. Manicom and myself have all filled the same position at different times. I did things that they benefitted from, and vice-versa. We share a lot of this kind of information.

● (0930)

Mr. Nicolas Dufour: Perfect. Thank you.

Ms. Aucoin, a little earlier you stated that you have eliminated some of the steps for the family reunification category in low-risk cases. Could you talk a little about this with us?

Ms. Micheline Aucoin: For example, a few years ago, in certain regions, we were faced with cases of fraud. We therefore put in place measures to sift them out. Given that we did not know the extent of the problem, we set up a systematic document verification process. After two years, we reviewed what we had done and realized that the fraudulent cases accounted for only 2 or 3% of our caseload. As for the verification process, it targeted our entire clientele and added three weeks to processing times. We then said to ourselves that we would have to manage the risk, study this small percentage of cases and determine if there were any patterns that stood out.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Thi Lac.

[Translation]

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My first question is also for Ms. Aucoin.

During your presentation, you talked about the investor program. You said that, last year, at the Manila office, you received fewer than 20 applications for the federal program and fewer than five for Quebec's program. You however stated that some 100 investor applications have yet to be processed. Does that mean that more than 75 applications are more than three years old?

Ms. Micheline Aucoin: Last year, we received 20 applications, of which 5 were from Quebec. However, approximately 100 people have indeed been on our list for more than three years. Investor class applicants are not priority cases, except for Quebec.

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac: At that pace, how are you going to go about reducing this list of 75 applicants? What means are you going to use?

Ms. Micheline Aucoin: As I was saying, we have priority cases to which we devote our resources. We work with set targets and priorities.

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac: My next question is for Mr. Frank.

You said that at the Beijing office, 33% of applicants in the family reunification category are called to an interview. You also said that the marriage of convenience risk is high. Are the majority of these marriages mixed or are they marriages between men and women of Chinese ancestry?

Mr. Sidney Frank: We have no statistics that tell us if the spouse in Canada is of Chinese ancestry or not. However, I would say that the majority of individuals who sponsor someone in China are of Chinese descent.

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac: You have no statistics regarding these 33% of applicants invited to an interview?

Mr. Sidney Frank: No, we do not study that aspect.

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac: Mr. Manicom, you stated, with regard to sponsored grandparents, that it is sometimes difficult to establish the family relationship. What means do you use to confirm this kinship?

• (0935)

Mr. David Manicom: There are two main mechanisms, or perhaps three. The first one is that of document verification by the Indian authorities, and these documents are sometimes fakes. The second tool, that is mostly used when the documentation is not verifiable or when the results are not clear, is DNA testing. In some situations, we visit the village where the family lives and we question neighbours in order to try and determine who really lives in a given dwelling.

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac: Very well. Thank you. Do I have some time left? Thirty seconds?

I have a final question for Mr. Frank.

You stated that, in the case of students, the new rules pertaining to medicals had greatly reduced processing times. We know that, in the majority of cases, when individuals present sponsorship applications, they must submit to a medical examination. They must provide the results upon application. However, when the individual is invited to an interview or when the file is complete, the person must often undergo a new medical, the first results no longer being valid. Would there not be some way of proceeding, in the case of medicals, in order for sponsorship applications to be processed more efficiently? Would you have any suggestions to make to the committee?

Mr. Sidney Frank: In the case of applications to sponsor a spouse, these individuals undergo a medical before applying, but I do not believe that this is compulsory. Furthermore, it is rare that the results are no longer valid when the person is invited to an interview. In the case of China...

[English]

The Chair: We're going to have to move on. I'm sorry, you're well over.

Ms. Chow.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): I noticed that in New Delhi traditionally it's been, like, 2,000 or 3,000, over the last ten years or so, whereas in 2005 about 4,271 came in—just parents.

What actually happened there? Did you do a backlog clearing? Because in the ten-year trend, that's the only year it all went up.

Does anyone choose to answer that?

I don't have a lot of time, so...

Mr. David Manicom: I was the director in headquarters at that time, and Mr. Frank was in Delhi doing the work.

At that time, the government had reduced for a brief period the levels objective for parents to 6,000. Early in the calendar year, there was considerable public discussion of that and the number was increased to, I believe, 18,000. So we had to meet that objective very quickly. We had a large inventory available in New Delhi. We sent large SWAT teams of officers to New Delhi to achieve that objective.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Well, in Beijing in the same year, it dropped to 297. Then if you look at the six-year trend from 2005 to 2010, it hovers between 600 and 500. But if your target is about 1,000, it's about half that number. So how does that work?

If there was an intake, the target went up, then why New Delhi and not in Beijing at that period? The reason I ask is that...

Go ahead.

Mr. David Manicom: I'm afraid I don't recall; to my memory, we focused on the oldest inventory globally.

Ms. Olivia Chow: In Beijing, then, if the target is around 1,000...

Maybe, Mr. Gilbert, you can tell us. In 2009 the number was 637, and 2010, 513. So it's consistently short. That's not the target.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: I don't have the same number as you do, I think.

Mr. Sidney Frank: I can say that in the time that I've been in Beijing, which has been since 2006, we've always come in right on target for the target we were allocated.

Ms. Olivia Chow: I'm talking about parents.

Mr. Sidney Frank: Yes, definitely.

• (0940)

Ms. Olivia Chow: The number that I received from the House of Commons request probably is not correct, then.

So from 2006 and 2010, it's—

Mr. Sidney Frank: Always right on target, yes.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Okay.

Do you folks track how many people died while waiting? This is the parents who ended up abandoning their applications.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: No.

Ms. Olivia Chow: You don't track that?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: There are a number of reasons why people would want to abandon their applications. What happens is that sometimes we ask for people to provide documents or to do a medical exam, and if they don't do it then we have to close the file.

So we don't necessarily know why. Some people change their mind sometimes.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Right.

Approximately what percentage of all cases are abandoned, in terms of parents?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: I don't have that information. With the current system, when there is a refusal we cannot register the reason for the refusal, whether it's a relationship of convenience, whether it's because the person died, or the person changed their mind. We don't register the reason, so we wouldn't know.

With the GCMS in the future, with our new system, we'll be able to record the reason for refusal, but that's not currently the case.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Not now, yes.

When is that new system coming in?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: It's almost implemented everywhere; 85% of all the offices have it now. New Delhi and Manila have it, Beijing will in two weeks, and on March 16 our office in the U.S. will be the last one. So abroad it will be done, but not in Canada.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Not in Canada.

On another note, why did you move the administrative processing of skilled workers from Islamabad to London in...?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: There are a number of reasons. One of the reasons is the conditions in Islamabad. It's very difficult, first of all, because of the security situation there, to increase the size of our staff. Essentially, we would have to increase the size of our staff

when at any given point they're asked to stay at the compound, in their house. It's for security reasons, that part.

We had the capacity to do it from London. London's already responsible for all the gulf countries, for instance. It was one more country. So what we're hoping for is to achieve efficiency out of it and allow Islamabad to concentrate actually on family class cases and on visitors where there is a significant challenge.

Ms. Olivia Chow: I have a question for Mr. Frank.

Now that the Beijing number, the target, has gone up, do you see that the wait times could drop somewhat? I mean, 37 months is on the high end of the average of all the other countries.

Mr. Sidney Frank: Definitely, yes; our inventory is at —

Ms. Olivia Chow: You said 7,000.

Mr. Sidney Frank: Yes. If we're doing a target of 2,500, in most instances that'll be two people, so it's going to make a difference.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Can you project what you think it might be for this coming year?

Mr. Sidney Frank: I wouldn't want to do that.

Ms. Olivia Chow: I can understand why.

Mr. Sidney Frank: In some instances, cases can take time; parents have medical conditions, or there's a need for further medical examinations. One of the things that actually slows down processing is the parents are in Canada because we issue visitor visas to them. They travel to Canada, we write to their address in China, but they're not there. So it goes back and forth.

Ms. Olivia Chow: How many are like that? I thought that if you were applying for a family class application, the likelihood that you could actually travel, and get this visa, was quite remote.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: We don't have a record of how many do have a visa now, but 50% of the parents and grandparents who are currently in the inventory had a visa at some point. So it's a fair number who are travelling back and forth between the two countries.

With regard to the processing time, there's just one thing to keep in mind. Where we're finalizing a lot of old cases, the processing time does not go down sharply because of that, because when we finalize cases that are 35 months old, the processing time will be 35 months. It's only after time that it will go down.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Shory.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for coming.

This morning, Mr. Chair, my comments might be seen as partisan politics, but the fact is that it was the Liberal government who increased the right of landing fee to \$975 and who ballooned...who let the inventory of skilled workers balloon more than 650...which was taking more than six years.

Also, the fact is that this government has brought the right of landing fee to almost 50%.

Also—

● (0945)

Mr. Justin Trudeau: A point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Trudeau, on a point of order.

You know, before you say anything...

It's your dime, and you can say what you like, but the difficulty is that I'm trying to keep order here. I quite frankly think that probably would antagonize the opposition.

Mr. Trudeau has a point of order.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: I would just point out, Chair, that this is a study on wait times, not fees.

The Chair: It's well taken.

Mr. Shory, perhaps you could proceed.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Thank you for the comment from my colleague, but absolutely the fee and wait times are in the same part.

Let me get back to the wait time that my friend is interested in. The wait time, under this government, for the skilled worker category is now less than one year, not six years or plus.

Having said all of that, as the majority of the south Asian community in Calgary lives in my riding, I would like to ask my question, and address it to Mr. Manicom.

Mr. Manicom, I understand that in tackling wait times, we must make smart decisions, and we must make the decisions that are in the best interest of Canada. I would like to ask you what sort of problems you see specifically in your region that can account for prolonged applicant wait times.

Mr. David Manicom: Generally speaking, long wait times are not the result of processing admissions. Long wait times are generated when the volume of applications received is larger than the targets we are permitted to issue. That is for the overwhelming majority of wait times at missions abroad.

It is certainly true that, in addition to that, a certain number of applications have fraudulent documentation on them and generate additional processing time, and particularly in the parents and grandparents category, medical complications, particularly active tuberculosis, can lead to significant processing times.

Those I think are the smaller element of processing delay, the larger one being the difference between application intake and these targets.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Talking about the numbers, last year Canada welcomed a record number of newcomers, which is more than from the last 50 or 55 years. Of course, you and your counterparts had a lot to do with that. I'd like to thank you for that once again.

We understand that the overseas network has its own operational targets within the immigration level plans. Did your admissions, specifically Delhi's admissions, exceed these targets? If yes, why and how?

Mr. David Manicom: We issued 102% of our visa target. Most of the overage was due to achieving 109% of the target for priority

family class spouses, where our policy globally is to process as many as we can and as fast as we can, so as not to keep immediate family members apart.

Aside from our family class priority program, we met our target at 100.1% or 100.2%, if memory serves.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Is it fair to say that the track this government has recently taken is bringing positive results and the timely processing of applications, specifically in skilled workers?

Mr. David Manicom: I think that's perhaps a question for my minister, sir.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Okay.

Anyone can answer this question. What do you think government should do more to make the program more efficient and effective?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: I would say the challenge of the current government and any government is to make the program as simple as possible. It's definitely an issue. To have a certain amount of control over the intake of applications has a major impact. That's certainly what we see with the last skilled worker program that has a cap on the number of applications received.

Besides that, it would be up to the government of the day to decide that having simple programs is the key thing.

● (0950)

Mr. Devinder Shory: Talking about the cap, if I understand it correctly, with the skilled workers category, recently there was a cap in specific categories.

As Mr. Manicom mentioned, they have exceeded the target last year. If they exceed or finish their target or the capped target within time or before time, would you be able to address the family stream if there are more than what you assigned for coming here?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: My colleague described the work that they do at the mission, where a significant part of the work has to do with temporary resident visas. It has a huge impact on our capacity to make decisions and to issue immigrant visas. In 2010 we had some capacity to do it, because there were fewer visitors who came in 2009. There's always a lag time between visa issuance and arrival in Canada. For instance, almost all the immigrants who are going to arrive today, February 15, received their visa in 2010, not this year. They received it last year.

Could we do more? It depends partly on resources. Resources are definitely an issue, but the targets have by far the most impact on processing time. With regard to priority cases for spouses and minor children, there's no target per se. It's an estimate. The estimate depends on the number of applications we receive, so a lot of the overshoot of the target last year was due to a higher number of spouse applications.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shory.

I have a couple of questions for Mr. Gilbert.

Does one of these three missions have greater wait times than the others?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: The wait time is slightly different in each of our 60-odd missions. The processing time for priority spouses is shortest in Beijing. The longest is probably in Nairobi. It does vary from place to place, but it's not....

The Chair: I understand that. But I get impressions from questions that are asked by my colleagues that some areas are more difficult than others. I think it's important for the committee to know if Nairobi, say, is a problem. If the other missions are a problem, we need to know that, because there may be something the government can do.

You mentioned that resources may be an issue. There may be other issues.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: Yes, resources is one of the issues. With regard to spouse processing, it definitely is the case. Other issues have to do with a spike of applications in other categories, such as students or visitors. Our programs are fairly simple and what we call "intake control" has a major impact as well.

We try to even it out as much as we can. We sent additional resources to Nairobi last year, but those resources were taken from other missions, so it evened out at some point between missions. Some places are going to get shorter and some will get longer.

The Chair: Yes.

With respect to granting visas...and this is with respect to each of these three missions, and Nairobi, I suppose, is another one. What percentage of visitors in each year, where visas are granted, don't return?

• (0955)

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: Well, we—

The Chair: The reason I ask is that members of Parliament are often asked about getting a mother or sister over. One of the favourite responses is that, well, they're worried that they're not going to get home.

Is there a problem in some of these missions?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: We don't have exit control, so we don't know the number of people who don't return. We know those who claim refugee status, or who ask to stay on humanitarian grounds. The number is significant if you look at the number of refugee claims. Many of them came with visas that we issued. Every day a visa is going to be issued in one of those three missions. Some will remain in Canada and claim refugee status who were originally supposed to be coming to visit family members.

Do we have exact data? No, because we don't have exit control. But every day we get notice of a person who came to visit a sister and on arrival claimed refugee status. It happens every day at almost every mission.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here and for the work you do.

I have a couple of questions around targets. I have trouble with the use of the word "target", because usually a target is something for which you're going from zero to try to achieve, and you're actually working the other way. You're actually working with an inventory that you're trying to limit, so I would actually call it a "quota", not a target.

When I worked in business we wanted to produce so much steel. That was our target. When I was a pastor in a church and wanted to bring in so many people and so much money, that was a target. This isn't a target. This is actually a quota.

So I'm interested in knowing, following up on Mr. Manicom's remarks, what role you play in setting the government's targets, and what role the inventories you maintain play in setting the targets that the government uses.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: If I could, I will start just by saying that on the government target in general our role is largely consultation. Also, it is our duty to say whether we can do it or not. Because even if we are asked to do 10 times more or even to do twice as many skilled workers, I would tell my minister, "Sorry, but even if you want to, I can't." So part of our role is to say what's feasible and what's not.

When it has been determined on the policy side that we will accept so many people in Canada, our role on the operations side is really to make sure that it does happen. It's also to divide between missions... the role of actually setting targets between missions is largely operational, so it is with us because it needs to be modified a number of times during the year. For instance, we've already done it twice since the beginning of the year. There is always minor tweaking here and there, but let's say our mission in Abidjan was closed for a number of weeks. Then Abidjan will not issue all those visas, so we have to make sure that other offices compensate for that.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: In Beijing for 2011 the target is 2,650 parents and grandparents, in New Delhi it's 2,500, and in Manila it's 800. Do those numbers relate to your inventory or do they relate to a political target in Canada?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: It can't be political; they don't even know, I think, how we split it, so unless they receive the same documents that you do on the political side.... It is largely what we have in inventory with regard to all those categories. Where there is a target, we look at the inventory, at what is already in the pipeline. We look at how old that is, at how many are close to visa issuance, if I could say it that way.

Those are key things in determining if a mission can do it. Also, resource-wise, can we do it? Most of the categories are that way.

For some others, it's an estimate, or even if we don't have the cases in the inventory, we try to estimate where they will happen. That would be the case for spousal cases, or in the case, let's say, of provincial nominees or Quebec cases, where we may not have all the cases in the inventory at the beginning of the year. But we know that every year we receive so many from, let's say, Romania. Well, we know approximately how many Romanian cases we're going to have—

• (1000)

Mr. Robert Oliphant: But you're not really looking for cases. You're not looking for applications.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: We have plenty. We don't need to.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: You have enough. You're not going out asking for them, so you're not trying to reach a target. You're trying to limit a target.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: Well, I—

Mr. Robert Oliphant: You're not going out and saying, "Please, would you sponsor your spouse, because we are short on spouses"; you're not saying, "Please, would you sponsor your parents, because we're really short on parents this year, and I'm not going to reach my target." You actually have a big pile of them ready to go, and you filter out what you can filter out, based on some kind of a triage, I assume.

I have to explain this all the time to my residents who are trying to sponsor someone. They say it's processing time. They blame the bureaucrats.

The Chair: Your time is almost up, Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: But I don't think it's your fault. You're trying to do the best you can to get out as many people...but the target is only 11,200 this year.

It's ridiculous for me to be justifying...to try to defend the bureaucracy, because they're not the problem. I'm just trying to figure that out.

The Chair: Well, we're moving on to Mr. Dufour.

[Translation]

Mr. Nicolas Dufour: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Moving on to another area, I have questions regarding investor category immigrants.

Mr. Frank, during your presentation, you said that in the business class, processing times for 80% of the applicants in the federal program and in the Quebec program dropped from 47 to 30 months. Could you explain to us how you managed to shorten these times by 17 months?

Mr. Sidney Frank: As we explained several times, we have targets and we receive a certain number of applications. The targets were increased in Beijing and we were therefore able to process a greater number of applications.

Mr. Nicolas Dufour: In your view, are there still irritants between the federal government and the Quebec government with regard to wait times? Are there things that could be improved in this area in order for processing to be quicker still?

Mr. Sidney Frank: There is a Quebec office in Hong Kong. We work together; we talk to each other often. I believe we have very good relations and that things are running very well.

Mr. Nicolas Dufour: Excellent. Thank you very much.

Mr. Manicom, during your presentation, you talked about a business express program, in cooperation with 55 large firms. I am very interested by this.

Could you tell us more about it? Furthermore, might this type of program be applied at a greater scale?

Mr. David Manicom: This program was launched two and a half years ago in New Delhi. We are interested in those companies that have proven their reliability in the past and that have obtained a very high approval rate based on very reliable applications. We established direct links with these businesses, a contact point in order to avoid receiving fraudulent letters of invitation. The company communicates with us directly by e-mail. We have dramatically reduced the volume of documentation required, because we have been able to establish relationships of trust. The program developed gradually, and we are now dealing with more than 55 firms. These are mostly hi-tech firms and large multinationals that have the means to carry out a strict surveillance and control of the movements of their employees. Within the framework of this program, the reliability of the company facilitates decision-making.

The program has worked in a certain number of other markets, even if world markets are very diversified. Mr. Gilbert could talk to you more about this. We plan on determining if there are other markets where a similar program, tailored to the local context, might be put in place.

Mr. Nicolas Dufour: Yes, because even if the companies and the context change from country to country, it remains that there are Canadian companies with which we can do business, no matter what region is involved.

Mr. Gilbert, I believe you wish to make a comment.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: We evaluated the possibility of setting up the same process in different countries. We did this in Mexico, for example, and in Argentina. The country in the world with the greatest number of business visitors is, by far, China, and it is very difficult to put in place the same process there. Mr. Frank might be able to enlighten you further in this regard.

• (1005)

Mr. Nicolas Dufour: You could perhaps explain to us the reasons for these difficulties.

Mr. Sidney Frank: There are two reasons. First of all, a good many of the business visitors who come to Canada are people who work for Chinese government-owned companies. The visa application system is different. It is the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Chinese government that submits the applications, which prevents the establishment of a program able to work quickly. Furthermore, in the case of those business people who work for private companies, processing times are rather short, such that...

Mr. Nicolas Dufour: There is no interest in establishing such a process.

Mr. Sidney Frank: Indeed.

Mr. Nicolas Dufour: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mister Uppal.

[English]

Mr. Tim Uppal (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here.

Something was mentioned about political decisions being made here. Do you know personally of any time the minister set down targets, or MPs on the government side, or members of the Conservative Party being involved in setting targets, or do you decide targets with department officials?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: It depends what we are talking about. The global target is set by the governments; we're not involved. But the individual targets are set by civil servants, to determine whether it should be so much in this mission and so much in that one.

The only exception, I would think, would be with certain commitments the minister has made with regard to refugee processing. It's not necessarily setting up a target in a place in particular, but since the community is mostly in a particular country, it has that impact. The individual mission target is set largely by my office, and in consultation with the mission—i.e., can you or can you not do it?

Mr. Tim Uppal: Very good. Thank you.

Many times when we're talking about wait times and processing times, the quick answer is to hire more staff.

Can you give me an idea of the cost to have one staff member in, let's say, Delhi, Beijing, Islamabad, considering their living expenses, salary, travel expenses for the year?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: It's a difficult question. If we had twice as many staff abroad, we would still do 11,200 parents, grandparents. It's not necessarily the question of resources with regard to that. It's partly because in some places, or some years, let's say, there's an increase in volumes of visitors. As David mentioned, in the summer he has six officers doing skilled workers, and in the winter it's thirteen. A few years ago it was going down to zero for certain months of the year. So it does have an impact.

With regard to the cost of staff, it varies. If it's a Canada-based person who is there—

Mr. Tim Uppal: Somebody who's going to actually make decisions, a decision-maker on the ground.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: We have local decision-makers, so the cost is different for the two.

There is a fairly significant overhead because we are located within embassies. It's between \$300,000 and \$400,000 for the cost of the position. It's not the salary, of course, it's the cost of the position.

Mr. Tim Uppal: Sure; there are many things to consider.

Mr. Manicom, you mentioned that visitor visas spike in April. It's travelling season in Canada, and there's the wedding season for many communities.

When that workload spikes, how do you manage that? What happens to files, maybe on a permanent resident, that are sitting on

someone's desk? Do the same people who look at permanent residents look at the spike in visitor visas?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes. Officers in Delhi have a main duty and a back-up duty. All the officers are cross-trained, so we can move resources on a daily and weekly basis into the temporary resident unit to make sure we are always current on our temporary resident/visiting processing times. It's our conviction that in the end that preserves more resources for the permanent resident processing because it keeps us as efficient as possible. Our efficiencies deteriorate a lot if our visitor visa processing times go beyond three or four days, and your offices would certainly hear about it quite quickly.

So yes, it is the same people, and during the summer we mainly manage with our large skilled worker program. That's where resources go during the summer and the spring to help our temporary resident unit.

Our family class unit stays more or less the same size, because we also have a marriage season in India, and they also get busiest in the spring and summer with the new applications coming in.

• (1010)

Mr. Tim Uppal: There was a mention about MPs making inquiries. Based sometimes on the demographic of the riding, I know there are some MPs who send many more requests than others.

What does that do to your resources when you get so many requests from an MP on files? What do you have to do when you get one of these requests?

Mr. David Manicom: In New Delhi, we answer them almost always within 24 to 48 hours. We do in the order of 5,000 to 6,000 a year.

But that number is actually dropping. We hope that our MP newsletter has helped with that, and also the fact that our family class priority processing time has remained quite quick, as well as our visitor visa processing times.

They consume officer resources—I can't say they don't—but we have a very highly efficient, locally engaged staff who respond to many of the routine status inquiries under the supervision of a Canada-based officer. But yes, they do consume some resources.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Uppal.

Mrs. Grewal.

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

I, too, would like to thank you. I appreciate all your hard work on behalf of Canada and Canadians. Thank you so much.

I have been to the missions in New Delhi as well as Beijing, and it's not an easy job. I've seen first-hand all the work you do, and about the fraud that goes on.

I have very short questions, as my time is limited.

First, how will the implementation of the global case management system impact processing times?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: In the short term it will not have a significant impact on processing time. It allows us, however, to shift the workload around much more easily. If we have a spike of applications in one place, or if we want to clear a backlog somewhere for whatever reason, it allows us to redistribute work far more efficiently.

Otherwise, the efficiency...as Micheline has pointed out, we're still at baby steps of discovering what they are.

My colleagues who already have GCMS may want to comment.

David or Micheline.

Mr. David Manicom: I'd probably focus more on process efficiencies and therefore better use of tax dollars than directly reducing processing times—although it should, of course, over time achieve that as well.

It is early days. We're learning all of its capacities. It has many wonderful capacities that will also help us detect fraud, triage cases better, have better background information on applicants and companies and inviters and schools and so forth that will help us do our work more intelligently. It also has the ability to process applications in a very streamlined way, if you have very similar applications. For example, if you have a group of 37 entertainers going to a big event, it would enable you to put the same file note in each of the 37 files and make an exception to one of them, if you want to, rather than opening 37 separate files and putting in the same note and issuing the visa 37 individual times.

So it has a number of capacities, and I certainly think over time it will enable us to use tax dollars more efficiently and indirectly to reduce processing times, particularly, I hope, on the temporary resident side of things.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Why does the network not redistribute workloads to those nations with shorter wait times?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: We do from time to time. I think the last time I talked to the committee we were talking about Haiti, and that's exactly what we did between an Ottawa office and Haiti itself. Delhi transferred workload to Warsaw two or three years ago to try to use resources that may have been underused somewhere else; instead of moving people, moving work to people.

With regard to the processing time itself, it can help where there is no cap—for instance, the spouse caseload. With regard to processing times for skilled workers, the change in policy of limiting the intake has far more impact than GCMS itself.

One thing I should clarify on GCMS is that it has allowed us to, for instance, change some of the processes already. The application for spouse cases is now created in Canada before it goes to the mission. There are a few steps we can save over time so that when it gets to the mission they can concentrate on making the decision and less on clerical functions.

•(1015)

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Are there any suggestions for the government to make the system more efficient and workable for Canadians?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: Besides adding resources and changing policies, I'm not sure. It's not for me to answer that.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Do I have any more time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You do.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: How much?

The Chair: Well, as we're talking, you have about 15 seconds.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'm going to take those 15 seconds.

It's a question the analysts have asked, Mr. Gilbert. How many of your missions' employees are required to be experts on the region—in other words, experts on the culture? The Americans have this.

Second, what length of time is staff posted to a mission?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: On the first question, with regard to specialization, a lot of our specialized knowledge comes from our locally engaged staff, who are essentially at the mission all the time. Otherwise, we have people who develop expertise when they learn the language. Many officers in South America have worked in a few missions in South America—

The Chair: Excuse me for interrupting, but the reason I ask is that some cultures have different philosophies from others on, for example, marriage. So it's useful to have someone who's an expert in that area.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: Maybe we could describe what happens when a new officer gets to New Delhi.

Mr. David Manicom: We don't require officers to spend their entire career in India, for example, though we certainly have some who would like to do that. It's a fascinating country. We have a local training program for new officers, where they learn a great deal about local marriage law, which is very complicated in India, as well as customs, and ways of identifying problematic cases so we can decide which cases to interview.

So we do have a local training program. They are mentored with experienced officers. Then we have a unit of what we call case analysts, locally engaged staff who have been working in the program for many years and who provide an initial analysis of the case before it goes to the officer to make the final decision on whether or not to waive the interview or to convoke an interview. We have techniques like that.

We also maintain an extensive legal library of Indian family law as well as decisions of the immigration appeal division of the IRB and of Canadian courts in our legal unit in Delhi. We have elements like that.

The Chair: Mr. Wrzesnewskyj has some questions, but first, Mr. Gilbert, on average, what is the length of time that staff are at each mission?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: It varies according to what we call the hardship level, which is essentially mirroring what the Department of Foreign Affairs does. Where conditions are more difficult, it is a two-year posting. Where they are not as difficult, it is three years. Let's say in the United States or western Europe, it is four years.

Very often there are extensions given as well. That's why Sid has been in China for....

Is it six years now?

Mr. Sidney Frank: If you include a previous posting and time in Hong Kong, I've actually dealt with a Chinese caseload for close to 10 years.

The Chair: Is that good or bad? I know it's almost tempting to make a smart remark back, but obviously, is there a time when it's more appropriate to move to another mission?

Mr. Sidney Frank: I didn't do that consecutively. I've had a career of close to 20 years, so I've been there on and off, and in different capacities.

You were talking earlier on about having knowledge of the culture and so on. I believe I have that knowledge—

The Chair: Indeed, after 10 years, I am sure you do.

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj has some questions.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Gilbert, you've had this question asked of you several times and when you presented your introductory remarks, a number of times you referenced ministerial instructions. Mr. Uppal asked you this question. You said that the global numbers are set by the minister or the minister's office, so the number of 11,200, for parents and grandparents, family reunification, would have been set by the minister's office. Is that correct?

• (1020)

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: What is set by the minister's office is not the actual 11,200. The levels are set in the report that is tabled in Parliament in November. I am sure you have a copy of that. Following the levels tabled to Parliament, then the machinery looks at, okay, in order to get 12,000 grandparents to Canada in 2011, how many visas would we need to issue? We have to take into consideration visas that were issued in the last part of the previous year, that are currently in the hands of individuals, plus we have to calculate what we call the wastage rate, which are visas issued to individuals who never use them.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Without getting through the whole formula, the instructions come from the minister's office and then you find a way to meet those instructions. Is that correct?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: That's correct.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Okay, thank you. That means instructions came for 11,200 and you tried to figure out a way to actually meet those targets or those quotas.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: That's correct.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: The quota for Beijing is 2,650. Out of a global number, a target or a quota for immigration of 217,800, 11,200 is about 5.1%. Previously, under the Liberal government, it

was around 10% with variations, but it was around 10%. So we are seeing a reduction by half.

Now, it's 5% as a target globally, but in Beijing it's 2,650 out of a target of 9,425, which is 28.1%. Basically, one out of every three immigrants out of Beijing are in this small category of parents or grandparents.

How do you arrive at this decision that the vast majority of parents and grandparents are going to come—or a significant minority, one out of every three—out of this Beijing office? Is it because that's where the resources are and a combination of resources, and the backlog? How do you arrive at that?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: It depends on where the applications are. For each year, close to 50% of the worldwide applications we receive come from China or India.

When we talk about Beijing, Beijing and Hong Kong actually have essentially the same workload. The work is divided by province, but ultimately they're all from the same country.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Let me interrupt there. You say 50% come from those two places.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: Roughly 40-something percent.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Okay. If we take a look at New Delhi, it's 2,500. In fact, that's correct based on requests for parents and grandparents reunification; you're feeding these numbers. But when you take a look at Beijing with 2,650, parents and children are only 2,000. You actually have a higher ratio of grandparents who are being flowed through the system than parents and children.

At what point does this system become self-reinforcing, where you have extra resources...? For instance, you said 150 staff in New Delhi, so you have the extra resources and handle higher capacity. I've seen lineups at not well-resourced consular sections, and people know: listen, you have to stand in line for a day or so, and it's not worth it; you get turned down.

The Chair: We're running out of time, Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: On proportionality, you said pretty much that you try to have equal wait times globally, yet when I take a look at the extrapolations on some of these, and on some of your consular sections, the extrapolations are up to sixteen years as opposed to a year or two years in some of these very well staffed locations.

When is that going to be addressed? When are those communities here in Canada going to have some answers as to why they have to wait seven years, nine years, ten years, or fifteen years, because they just give up?

• (1025)

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: One thing I should clarify. I don't know which communities you're referring to, the sixteen years or the seven years, but I think the extrapolations are based on a fixed target and would be the same every year.

Actually, the set of targets that you have in hand was done in early January. We've changed it twice since then. It's something that changes over the years, as we've demonstrated I think. In the case of China, we have more than doubled the target for parents and grandparents this year and we reduced the one in India. We can't just take the number and multiply by the number of years. It simply doesn't work that way.

The reasons for the increases or decreases have to do with the size of the older inventory and we try to even it out. I don't say that we have succeeded. We'll probably never succeed to get it perfect, but we're trying to even out the processing time between missions and between communities.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Wong.

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

Thank you, colleagues from overseas.

Again, with my own dime and time, I visited at least two of the offices. Welcome back home. I must compliment you on all the good work you've done overseas. It's only when we have this opportunity face to face that we realize the kind of challenges you have.

It seems that there has been a lot of attention given to parents and grandparents. I want to ask once more if we are now issuing multiple entry visitor visas to parents and grandparents while they're waiting for a permanent residence visa. Am I right to say that?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: We certainly encourage all the missions to do it. Maybe my colleagues can talk about their own experiences.

Ms. Micheline Aucoin: Yes, we do see a lot of parents and grandparents applying for visitor visas while they're waiting for their permanent resident applications. By and large we facilitate and issue the visas.

Mrs. Alice Wong: In other words, you cannot say that these grandparents have to wait forever to see their grandchildren, because there is another channel to help them at least come over to see their grandchildren.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: That's correct.

Mrs. Alice Wong: Wonderful, thank you.

I understand that each mission.... It's just about the situation in Beijing. The reason you wanted to do more in a certain mission is the backlog and you wanted to make sure the backlog could be solved faster. Am I right to say that?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: That's correct. It's also to try to make processing times among missions more even. It is very long, but we try to make it even as much as possible.

Mrs. Alice Wong: In other words, the backlog, especially in Beijing, used to be, and still is, much bigger than in the other missions. Therefore you wanted to make sure that you were able to solve that challenge. Am I right to say that?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: That's correct.

Mrs. Alice Wong: Thank you very much.

Now, can you also explain how the challenges in your missions are different from the challenges that might be experienced in, say, London or Paris? I'm asking all of you.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: I'm not sure with regard to really different challenges. Definitely, it's a question of the layout of the offices. Some constraints have to do with offices, more specifically.

Communication is probably the key thing. One of our major problems in Africa, for instance, is communication with clients. In certain countries the mail system works very well; in some others it does not. We encourage offices as much as possible to use e-mail to communicate with clients more quickly, but not everybody has provided an e-mail address or has given us permission to use e-mail to communicate with them. So communication is probably one of the main things.

Reliability of documents is also key. If we get a certificate from the police from the U.K. and one from Bangladesh, we may not look at them the same way. We sometimes have to do more verification in certain countries than we do in others. In some countries, the document simply does not exist, so we have to look at other ways to find out the information required.

Mrs. Alice Wong: Yes, when I visited Manila, I was told by your staff that in some situations, for family reunification, it's the spouse who kept delaying sending you the necessary documents. Am I right to say that in Manila...?

● (1030)

Ms. Micheline Aucoin: Are you talking about the spouse who is sponsoring?

Ms. Alice Wong: Yes.

Ms. Micheline Aucoin: Yes, in some cases that happens. In Manila, of course, we have specific challenges. There's no divorce in the Philippines. Some people were married early in their lives and have separated. But on paper, that marriage is still valid. Then they remarry 10 years later. That's a problem, because on paper it means that they've married twice. So the lack of divorce is a specific challenge in the Philippines.

We have other challenges. For example, 10% of the Filipino population works abroad or has worked abroad. So they will give us their police certificates from the Philippines, but we also need to see the police certificates from these other countries, and so on.

We each have individual challenges. Those are specific to Manila, but my colleagues here would have their own specific challenges.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: Maybe one that is more generic with regard to parents and grandparents is that the reply to request is much slower than in any other category. Also, the use of visas is done more slowly than most categories.

It often has to do, as somebody mentioned, with the medical. For instance, many parents and grandparents have to do a furtherance of the medical. It's something we notice fairly broadly. And many parents and grandparents never submit the follow-up application. Their children want them in Canada, but they don't want that. That happens as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Wong.

We'll go to Mr. Dykstra.

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

There are a couple of things you mentioned in your report, Ms. Aucoin, that I was hoping you could elaborate on a little bit. The first was the large increase in the provincial nominee program in Manila and the changes that have been made here to give the provinces more jurisdiction in terms of numbers. You mentioned that over 10,000 visas were issued in that category and that the vast majority were processed in less than a year.

Could you expand a little bit and how you've changed the process somewhat based on the provincial nominee program having grown so substantially since 2005-06?

Ms. Micheline Aucoin: Yes, the provincial nominee is one category that has a priority attached to it, so we do process those very quickly.

We had an increased number of applications. At one point, we feared that we would be developing a backlog, but then our target was increased to match the number of applications. So despite a significant increase in the number of applications in that category, we have been able to maintain processing times at less than one year.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: One of the other challenges you noted is the fact that divorce is not available in the Philippines. Could you expand on why that is an issue?

Ms. Micheline Aucoin: I mentioned that many people separate. They marry young, and then they separate, but they never divorce because they cannot. It's possible to annul the marriage, but it's a very costly and lengthy procedure so most people don't bother. It is an issue when they remarry, but strictly speaking, legally they're not really allowed to remarry so when they marry a Canadian who wants to sponsor them, then we get into processing issues.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: You also mention that the global case management system has just been implemented after two to three months. I know you didn't want to expand on it in your comments here, but maybe just very briefly speak to the advantages it has given you so far and where you see it helping you in terms of lowering times and processing more quickly.

Ms. Micheline Aucoin: I think David and Rénauld have talked about that, so I will just echo their comments.

GCMS will allow us to very easily reallocate work to where the resources are. There are some other features. The group processing feature David mentioned will be a very useful tool to reduce processing times, especially in the temporary resident category, and then to reallocate resources to the permanent resident category.

We're still taking baby steps, so right now we're still trying to find tricks, exchanging best practices and so on. But we already see the possibilities.

•(1035)

Mr. Rick Dykstra: That's great; very good to hear.

Mr. Frank, one comment you made piqued my interest. We've just spent a great deal of time as a committee, as you are probably aware, passing Bill C-35. You referred in your comments to the fact that:

We are aware that consultants are promoting the investor programs in China as an alternative to the more restrictive Ministerial Instructions of the C-50 skilled worker category.

I wonder if you could expand on that a little bit. One of the big questions that came up during Bill C-35 that was very difficult to get answers to, or determine, is we strengthened the legislation with respect to our justice system to allow these consultants to face stronger criminal charges here in Canada, but of course it's very difficult for us to be able to charge someone in another country; in fact it's impossible.

You mentioned it here, so I wonder if you could expand on how these consultants have learned even just this process here, and how much time they spend in the offices to determine how Canada's legislation has changed and how it's going to impact them in terms of trying to convince folks to come to Canada.

Mr. Sidney Frank: I should preface my comments by saying these consultants aren't necessarily committing fraud when they're advising someone to apply under a category. It might not be the type of people we are envisaging with our new regulations for investors, but it is possible if you have property in China and you may be a manager in an office and you may meet the requirements. What a consultant looks for is a way of getting a visa for his clients.

That said, many consultants in China submit fraudulent information on behalf of their clients. It's a serious problem and it's something that makes our work more difficult. Certainly we'd welcome something that would assist us in terms of dealing with those consultants.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have one brief question that the analysts have suggested.

Some countries process a significant number of immigration applications in-country as opposed to missions abroad. Can you tell us—this is to any of the witnesses, but perhaps the witnesses from the missions abroad could answer it—what part of an immigration application is perhaps more appropriately reviewed in overseas missions?

Mr. Rénauld Gilbert: You're talking about the difference between a mission overseas versus in Canada?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Rénauld Gilbert: It's 85% abroad and about 15% in Canada.

The Chair: Are there parts that are dealt with abroad that might be more appropriately dealt with in Canada?

Mr. Rénauld Gilbert: I don't know about the complete application, but certainly part of the process can be done in Canada, possibly more efficiently. We're talking about, for instance, file creation.

With regard to making a decision, the people who are the best fit for making a decision are those who know the clientele better. Very often, what we find out...actually, we find that out in almost every single—

The Chair: I understand that. It's just that some countries have a more centralized form of process than Canada's. It would be useful if you would have any recommendations to the committee as to what portions could be perhaps more centralized.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: I'm not sure that I could make a comment in this forum here. One thing I could say with regard to the experience of other countries is that Australia, for instance, centralized a lot of their processing, and now they are in the reverse process of decentralizing. So depending on when you get the information, it makes a difference between the two....

Some parts of processes could be done onshore, as they say in Australia, and some offshore. Australia, for instance, takes sponsorships abroad; they don't take them inland. We do the reverse. Which one is more efficient? I probably still think that it is more efficient here, because we have a better place in Canada to assess the sponsorship of the person residing here.

I'm not sure I have a recommendation that I would be able to make. Both the centralized and the decentralized, depending on the process, have their advantages and disadvantages.

• (1040)

The Chair: Can any of the other witnesses comment on this centralization of applications?

Mr. Sidney Frank: Mr. Chair, you mentioned this earlier: how do we get knowledge of particular cultures? If we're dealing with a particular country where there is fraud, where we know there's fraud, and where we've identified fraud, it's important to have that local knowledge of the culture to make decisions on cases.

There are certain types of caseloads from countries with rule of law, countries where the risks are not very great, and if you're looking at centralizing decision-making, it would be those types of caseloads from those types of countries where you could possibly do that.

The Chair: Thank you.

I want to thank members for allowing me to ask so many questions this morning.

Mr. Trudeau.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Thank you, Chair.

To return to something that sort of caught my eye, when I deal with cases in my riding where people come to ask me why it's taking so long for their parents to come over, one of the things they're always frustrated by is the inability to actually get their parents to come over even on visitor visas. It's not nearly as common as some of the members think, or else my riding is being unfairly targeted, which I don't think.

Could you talk a little bit about what percentage of parents and grandparents waiting to be brought over are granted temporary visitor visas, what percentage of those who actually request it...?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: The only thing we have is the stats of people who have applied. That's about 50%. The majority have approvals, but we don't have stats that allow us to do that.... We'd probably need to pull several hundred cases and do an assessment out of that. We don't have it statistically, because when somebody comes to visit, we

don't record them as parents or grandparents. There is no record of that taken.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Is this something that's going to be fixed with the new case management system? Would you be able to monitor that?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: I don't think so. I don't think we have a record of reasons for visiting—visiting children, coming to the casino.... We don't have those subcategories for visas.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: But you should be able to know if someone is applying for a visitor visa and they're already in the system as waiting to come over, obviously. It's on those cases, just specifically, when people are rejected for visitor visas, that one of the most common check marks—and we've all seen the form—is that “we're not sure you'll return back at the end of your visa”. Also, when you've already indicated you want to come over and settle permanently because you're being sponsored, well, that's a big X against someone who's coming over to visit.

Mr. David Manicom: I'd put it a little bit the other way. We have the largest family class program in the world. We issue visitor visas to parents who are in process all the time; it's absolutely routine. As a matter of fact, if they're in process, they've generally already demonstrated that they have the financial capability to sponsor, so our officers issue five-year multiple entry visas to a lot of these cases.

Now, a lot of individuals are also refused. Normally, they're refused where the ties are very weak in the home country and the immigrant in Canada is not yet very well established and is probably not financially capable of sponsoring. There, you have a tricky call on the part of the visa officer, and some of those are refused.

The Chair: I think Mr. Wrzesnewszkyj wanted to ask a question.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: I'd just like to get a last question in.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: The principle of immigration is to bring people over to work and to serve our country in general. That's one of our goals. We're trying to improve Canada by improving the lives of Canadians here or from elsewhere.

Why is it important to bring over parents and grandparents of immigrants? We're still allowing 11,000 in, which is a significant number. What do people say is the need to have their parents and grandparents come over?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: I think you are probably as well placed as me to hear what people say with regard to that.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Well, how do you justify it?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: We're one of the very few countries that do that. Australia has a quota of 200 next year or something like that, so we are in a different situation.

The rationale that we hear most often is more for humanitarian reasons than for any other reason.

The Chair: Mr. Wrzesnewszkyj.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewszkyj: Has the minister's office ever communicated with you in the setting of these targets about the New Delhi or the Beijing consular sections?

•(1045)

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: No.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Okay.

I referenced earlier that the targets or the quota—

The Chair: Someone wanted to answer.

Was that yes or no?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: I said no.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: The number is 2,650 for the Beijing office, which is actually the highest category. Skilled workers is 2,000. Provincial nominees are 1,500 and that's basically one-third of your quota for the coming year.

When I compare that 2,650 to the Kiev office, it has a quota of 25. It's only 1.6% of the total as opposed to 28.1%. The wait times are seven or eight years as opposed to one to two years.

Do you think that in Kiev, for instance, parents and grandparents have less of a longing to be reunited with their children or grandchildren in Canada than those in places like New Delhi? Do parents, grandparents in a place like Nairobi have less of a longing to be reunified with their children and their grandchildren than those from New Delhi and Beijing?

How do we arrive at a number that is 1,000 times higher in one place than another, and where it is basically one-third of all the

immigrants—the highest category, in Beijing—higher than the skilled worker class or the provincial nominee class?

The Chair: We have to end this meeting.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: Okay.

Yes, it is 100 times higher. The—

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: It's 1,000 times higher. It is 25 compared to 2,650.

A voice: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: It's 100 times, yes.

The total inventory in Kiev is 163. In Beijing it is 6,928, so that is largely the main difference. In Beijing we essentially have something in the range of 400 times the inventory we have in Kiev. That is largely the rationale for it.

With regard to categories versus other categories, we have more parents applications in Beijing than we have for skilled workers. That is partially why the target is that way.

The Chair: We could probably go on another hour, but we have run out of time.

Mr. Gilbert, I appreciate you and your colleagues coming to provide us with comments. We have a problem with wait times in this country, and your remarks have been very helpful. On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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