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Chair

Mr. David Tilson

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•(0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. This is the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, meeting number 45, on Tuesday, March 1, 2011. On the orders of the day, our discussion is on immigration application process wait times.

As you can see from our agenda, we have for the first hour, which is now less than an hour, representatives from Nairobi, Kenya. In the second hour, we have representatives from Taipei, Taiwan.

For the final 10 minutes, we have a notice of motion from Monsieur St-Cyr. We will hopefully resolve that in the 10 minutes.

I would also like to advise the committee that our analyst, Daphne Keevil Harrold, is leaving us. It's hard to believe, but she's leaving on March 11. She's going to the Federation of Law Societies of Canada. She'll be here for a little bit, but not much.

She has served us well. I think we should show our appreciation and wish her well in her next adventure in life.

[Applause]

The Chair: I won't ask you to speak, because you're probably embarrassed.

An hon. member: I think she'd like to.

The Chair: Would you like to say a few words?

Ms. Daphne Keevil Harrold (Analyst, Library of Parliament): No, no.

The Chair: In any event, we'll proceed.

We will miss you, Daphne. On behalf of the committee, we wish you well in the next stage of your life.

We have with us this morning Monsieur Gilbert, who is the director general of the international region of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. He's going to introduce each of the witnesses for each hour.

Monsieur Gilbert, you have the floor.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert (Director General, International Region, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): I don't have a speech, per se. I mostly want to introduce my colleagues and to be available for questions.

One thing I'd like to point out is that this morning you are going to see two offices—our colleagues who'll be talking are from these

offices—that represent probably both ends of the spectrum in terms of type of clientele. I think it will give you a very good idea of the rationale for the differences between the various offices. We have an extremely complex type of workload in some places, and in others we have a single type of clientele.

Before going any further, I'd like to introduce my colleagues from Nairobi. You have Michael Boekhoven on the screen. He is the immigration program manager for that office. Two of his colleagues are with him, and they are Taitu Deguefé and Liisa Coulombe. You can't see them now, but they are there to answer questions, if you have some.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Monsieur Boekhoven....

Did I pronounce your name correctly, sir?

Mr. Michael Boekhoven (Immigration Program Manager, Nairobi, Kenya, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): That's correct. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

If you could make a brief presentation to the committee, we would appreciate that.

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak to the committee about visa processing in Nairobi. As you know, my name is Michael Boekhoven, and I am the immigration program manager in Nairobi. I'm joined on the line by Taitu Deguefé, my operations manager, and Liisa Coulombe, who is the head of our permanent resident processing unit.

Before talking about specific aspects of Nairobi's visa programs, I'd like to give the committee a brief contextual overview. Nairobi's is a full-service immigration program responsible for 18 countries. Of those countries, the most significant volumes come from Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Mauritius. But in terms of time spent on processing due to the complexity of the cases, Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi constitute the bulk of the work.

The size and geographical realities of the territory covered, ongoing strife within and between countries, the complex interweaving of national, ethnic, and tribal relations, the vastly differing legal frameworks and cultural contexts, and the poor and deteriorating quality of infrastructure throughout the region make the simplest processing tasks problematic, and all contribute to making Nairobi a very challenging program on every front.

Postal and related communications systems are so rudimentary or unreliable that it is difficult to establish and maintain contact with applicants. The relative lack of sophistication of our clientele requires repeated and numerous efforts to request information or even to come for an interview. Travel within the region is arduous and often dangerous.

Nairobi is staffed by twelve Canadian officers, which includes two Canada Border Services Agency officers and one medical officer. There are three locally engaged officers with decision-making authority, and 33 other locally engaged support staff, or LES.

The program has been supported by a constant rotation of temporary duty officers and between four and six emergency LES. Nairobi is also supported by LES in Addis Ababa and in Kinshasa and by staff in other offices such as the Canadian consulate in Kigali and in offices of the honorary consulates in Kampala, Burundi, Djibouti, and Madagascar.

Nairobi relies extensively on support from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in a number of locations. Personal security for both Canada-based and locally engaged staff is an area of ongoing concern. Nairobi is itself subject to increasing political, ethnic, and crime-related violence. This has a direct impact on efficiencies within the office where issues of personal safety take priority—for example, overtime after dark is not a viable option.

In 2010 Nairobi processed more than 1,800 family class cases, nearly 1,400 refugee cases, approximately 500 skilled worker cases, and about 11,700 applications from visitors, students, and temporary workers. Included in the family class are dependants of refugee claimants in Canada; and in the refugee program, dependants of refugees whose family members were landed without them.

Now I will turn to the various business lines. First of all, I'll speak about the family class. In general, our clientele is not familiar with procedure; given the unreliable nature of official record-keeping, lack of documentation and improperly completed applications are constant sources of inefficiency. This is made more challenging, as already mentioned, because our applicants are often in remote locations where there are real difficulties in communications.

Nairobi met its full priority family class target for 2010, and the capacity for the office to deal with these cases continues to improve. For 2011 we expect to issue an additional 200 visas over the number issued last year.

● (0855)

Although family class priority application intake is down again in 2010 over 2009, the overall inventory totals over 2,140 cases. In 2010 the processing times peaked at 29 months.

To address these processing times, Nairobi has undertaken a number of initiatives. They include a major reorganization of the entire visa section, which was completed in 2010; upfront file triage; focused reallocation of resources; and deployment of significant incremental and temporary resources.

Nairobi is unable to waive more than 50% of cases, due in part to the lack of documentation and the propensity of applicants to add dependants who are not their biological children. This leads, of course, to a disparity between processing times for waived cases and

cases requiring interview, especially for those who are not readily accessible.

Another recent trend has been the substantial growth in the number of adoption cases handled by Nairobi, largely out of Ethiopia. Although there is growing interest in adoptions from Uganda, a country where the legal framework is in flux, since neither country has signed the Hague convention on adoption, and since the majority of children being adopted have at least one living biological parent, a great deal of caution has to be exercised. Although there are relatively few of these adoption cases, they take an inordinate amount of visa office time and resources to deal with.

Included in the family class are the dependants of persons who have made refugee claims in Canada. These cases are especially challenging, since applications are rarely complete and the dependants are difficult to reach.

With respect to refugees, Nairobi's area of responsibility is a major source of refugees. In 2010 the visa office managed a government-assisted refugee target of 1,465 and a privately sponsored refugee target of 700 persons. The conflicts that have generated this refugee situation have also resulted in a pool of applicants that may include war criminals and other security threats. For these reasons, applications must be thoroughly reviewed, and the vast majority have to be interviewed. However, interviewing is extremely onerous, given the difficulty in travelling to remote camps.

There is also considerable fraud within the privately sponsored refugee movement. Supporting documentation is often suspect or fraudulent, and the proportion of cases not resulting in visa issue has reached close to 50% for 2010. DNA is used frequently to establish family relationships. Nairobi has done considerable outreach with the sponsorship agreement holders to increase both the scrutiny of the applicants they put forward and the supporting documentation.

With respect to the economic class, compared to missions in Asia, Nairobi has a much smaller inventory of skilled workers. By far the largest part of this movement is for Quebec skilled workers, which had a target in 2010 of 935 visas compared to the total target of 230 for federal cases. The majority of Quebec cases come from Mauritius and are relatively straightforward.

Nairobi's provincial nominee program has seen some growth, especially from Alberta and Manitoba, but the inventory is small. It is around 80 cases.

Although Nairobi's investor program is also very small, processing times are lengthy given that documentation is dubious and verification of documents is difficult, if not impossible.

With respect to temporary residents, students, and temporary foreign workers, despite the global economic downturn, Nairobi's temporary resident volumes continue to climb. The number of applications received by our office in June 2010 broke all previous records. With corruption endemic in the region, document verification has repeatedly been shown to be unreliable, and civil documentation is extremely susceptible to improper issue.

• (0900)

As a result, few documents can be taken at face value. This office frequently has to take the time-consuming step of confirming details with Canadian hosts, businesses, or schools.

Many applicants, including senior government officials, from our region are inadmissible—for activities ranging from genocide to subversion—a factor that complicates both bilateral and multilateral relations.

Thank you for your attention. I would be happy to take any questions the committee may have.

The Chair: Thank you, sir. You obviously have a very challenging job. I know that members of our committee will have some questions for you.

First, Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you very much for being with us today. Thank you for your ongoing work, which I recognize as being very complicated.

I have three areas I want to look at. They largely come out of my constituency work, where we deal with the area offices around the world.

Very frankly, maybe for the reasons you said, the Nairobi cases are the most difficult ones for my constituency staff. They find contact with your office to be very difficult. They find communications with officials from the office to be slow, regardless of whether or not there are delays in your office with respect to the actual clients who are seeking admission to Canada. We are also finding constant difficulties in simply getting information.

There is a question, first, of resources. I think you have a very good understanding, obviously, and gave a good presentation regarding the difficulties you have in the geopolitics of the area. You have 18 countries, and one of the largest surface areas, that you have to cover.

So my first question is on resources. Regardless of how difficult it is, it seems to me that we need to match the resources to the requests and the difficulty of dealing with that request. I wonder what your office would require to actually match the responses that we receive from other offices.

• (0905)

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: Correct me if I'm wrong, but I kind of get two questions there. One is with respect to the difficulty of contacting the mission, and the second is with respect to the level of resourcing for the program.

Allow me to address the first one first.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: We think they're related.

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: I'll keep them separate for the moment. Specifically with respect to communicating with clients, with stakeholders such as yourselves, and other people who are interested in operations at this mission, I believe it was in 2008, just prior to my arrival, that we received incremental resources to staff a client service unit.

The client service unit has since been tasked with ensuring that our response times go down and the quality of our responses go up. I don't have specific details at this point, in terms of statistics, but I do know that our client service unit has a service standard of five days to respond to incoming e-mails, and that they have met that of late. They actually have exceeded it from time to time.

That is not to say that we cannot improve the level of service we provide people who ask questions of us. We are working on that, and we're developing tools that will be able to improve that yet again. I'm not trying to say that we're there yet, but we certainly have improved.

I sincerely hope that your constituency offices, your constituency staff, have noticed at least a marginal improvement in that.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I'll check on that, sir.

I just want to say that I don't generally see members of Parliament as "clients" of government departments. I think we're members of Parliament, and we are attempting to work for the 125,000 people who live in our riding and represent them to the Government of Canada. I don't see ourselves as clients, but I find that a kind of telling thing.

I would like to move on from that question. The Canadian Council for Refugees has published a report on Nairobi, entitled "Nairobi: Protection Delayed, Protection Denied". Are you familiar with that report?

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: I have seen it, yes, sir, but it has been some time.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: It does raise concerns about the office with respect to particularly Sudanese refugees, and of strong concern... and your concern about so-called private sponsorships. These are often church groups and very well-respected groups in our community attempting to do that.

An example is that in 2005, a Sudanese family being sponsored by a group in Canada submitted applications to your office. The family lives in the Fugnido refugee village in Ethiopia. They fled Sudan more than 10 years ago. The visa office sent a letter saying that the normal processing time was between 24 and 36 months. They were finally interviewed in December 2008, 40 months later. In the meantime, the family had grown in size, and that meant new applications had to be filled out. Since the paperwork is complex, the sponsor had to send someone to the refugee camp to help the family. The family was accepted in principle following the interview, but they were still waiting, at the time of this report a year ago, to hear about that.

It becomes a 15-year process. With the private sponsorship willing to accept them in Canada, it seems that there isn't a contextual ability to modify your procedures to actually deal with the realities of the situation.

• (0910)

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: The issues that you raise are complicated in and of themselves.

First of all, I would not want to suggest that service agreement holders, whether they be churches or other advocacy groups, are necessarily involved in fraud. We have no evidence of that; there's no suggestion of that. However, within the context of our client, within the context of our applicant, and within the context of the overall atmosphere here, fraud is endemic. Fraud is quite extensive and pervasive. It involves applicants destined for Canada. It involves applicants destined for other countries—the United States, the U.K., and so on.

On the length of time for individual cases, I don't know the details of the case to which you refer, nor can I discuss an individual case in this forum. However, we do have an inventory right now of refugees that is in excess of our targets, which is in excess of our needs. That exists for both the government-sponsored, the GARs, as well as the privately sponsored, the PSRs.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur St-Cyr.

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: Within the government-sponsored refugees—

The Chair: I'm sorry, sir, we have to move on. Thank you.

Monsieur St-Cyr.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Good morning. It's a pleasure to see you. We didn't ask you whether you were in your office or outdoors, but the weather seems to be very good where you are. That raises the spirits because it's very cold here this morning.

I'd like to go back to the question by Mr. Oliphant, who said that it was very difficult to contact our constituency offices. I'll check to see whether there has actually been an improvement in Nairobi recently. However, I can say, based on what I'm told, that it's harder with the Nairobi mission than with most other missions. When my assistant responsible for constituency cases comes to see me because she's having a communication problem with overseas representatives, most of the time it's a problem with Nairobi.

I can understand that your mission is having difficulty processing applications because you explained the additional complexities that arise in other regions of the world. However, can you explain to me why your mission has more difficulty with exchanges of information and updates with constituency office staff? Why is that harder for your mission than for others?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: As I said in response to the previous question, my understanding is that we have improved the level of service to constituency offices and staff, to members of Parliament who contact us directly. I would be more than happy to take on board

any specific examples that you or your constituency office have. Contact me and I can follow up and find out exactly where our systems are weak.

In terms of the reports I've seen from our client service unit, there has been improvement in the average time of questions. Again, as I say, that's not perfect. Things do slip between the cracks, and I would be very interested to hear about it. Please, do contact me personally, and I'll see what can be done.

• (0915)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: I'll take note of that.

I'd like to have a somewhat better understanding of the wait time dynamic, both where you are and elsewhere in the world. Mr. Gilbert could perhaps answer as well.

Have you previously modelled wait time and tried to explain its various components? We can of course conduct investigations, check documents, travel, conduct interviews and review the documentation. The fact remains that, in the processing of many cases, the essential aspect of wait times is simply down time, when the file waits in a filing cabinet or in an office.

Unless I'm mistaken, you said there was a waiting time of 29 months. Do you know for what percentage of that time the file is just waiting? I understand that you handle other files in the meantime. However, for a given file, for how many days does nothing happen because people are working on other files? Have you previously quantified that, in Nairobi or elsewhere internationally?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: I can only speak for Nairobi.

I don't know if my colleague wants to address it from an international region perspective or not.

No? Okay.

For Nairobi, then, certainly a proportion of the processing is, as you say, empty time. It's sitting, not being actively pursued. However, that proportion of time is much less. Although I haven't quantified it, per se, since my arrival here I get the impression that a lot of it has to do with the infrastructure, with the communications of cases here.

I can't adequately describe in a brief response the difficulties that we have in contacting our clients. The phone doesn't work; although they have mobiles, and mobile phones continue good penetration into the market, they're not reliable, and people don't always have access to them.

The mail does not always work. People may have access to an e-mail address, but they only infrequently check it because they don't have daily access to computers.

It's a huge problem, and we've gone to the stage of trying to contact our clients directly. We try to contact their sponsors directly, we contact stakeholders in the application, wherever they may be. I've even used the services of members of Parliament to assist me in establishing contact with applicants. So that's part of the problem.

Another part of the problem is the complexity of the cases. Cases are legally complex, they're procedurally complex, and that slows processing as well.

Fraud is an issue here. If we have to send a document—
[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Unless I'm mistaken, you're reviewing those examples. That's not quantified, at least in the case of Nairobi. There aren't any studies or analyses that you could submit to parliamentarians that would explain to us how much time is represented by waiting and legal analysis.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Is that done on an international scale?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: I don't think we can provide you with a model like what you're describing. However, based on the measures that have been taken elsewhere, on average, a file is in someone's hands for a little more than two hours. There is of course downtime during that period.

The longest waiting period during processing is at the start of the process, even before we start. For example, in the case of sponsored refugees, the inventory consists of nearly 8,000 persons, whereas the objective is 700. We're obviously processing the oldest cases right now, not the recently arrived cases. We can't do that according to the set objective.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Gilbert.

Ms. Chow.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): My question is really to our director, Mr. Gilbert. Eighteen countries is huge, in terms of Nairobi being one office. What kind of regional benefits would you get from one country with one office serving 18 countries?

As well, do you have a staffing formula that is connected to the targets? If, for example, the targets in Nairobi are 6,580 this year and it has 12 staff, given all the inherent problems, is it comparable to other offices that have similar numbers but fewer challenges?

On top of that, I noticed they do internal, which I support; they process the temporary visas for visitors, whereas New Delhi and Beijing, for example, have an Indian company that processes them all.

If you calculate that, how do you come to decide that the Nairobi office would have 12 staff and 33 locally engaged staff? How do you make that staffing decision, based on the inherent problems that we have heard, serving 18 countries?

•(0920)

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: First, I should point out that the company you refer to in India and China is the same that we are using in Nairobi.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Oh, I see. And Mexico, etc., they're the same?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: Mexico is a different one, but this is the same as in Delhi. They don't process cases, as you suggest. They essentially courier, the company that they are using—

Ms. Olivia Chow: I understand that. They do intake.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: Okay.

Yes, we do have a formula, that each decision-maker makes an average of 860 decisions on permanent residents a year. That varies a lot from country to country. Nairobi is one place where each decision-maker makes fewer decisions, and for this reason we're providing more officers per case than we do, let's say, in a place like Delhi.

The reason for that is the variety of caseloads that you describe. That's why essentially we have to, if possible, add staff. Nairobi is the only place where we added staff last year. We added two decision-makers, plus six locally engaged. We'll add as well this year, in order to compensate for the fact that they can't be as productive for a variety of reasons.

One reason that hasn't been pointed out so far is that they're often on the road. If you go to the refugee camp, let's say you pack up all your kit, you drive there, you're there for three days, you come back; essentially you're losing time during that period of time. You have to retype your notes. There are things like that that have to happen. That's with regard to the formula, if I may.

If I compare it to other missions, the same number of staff, let's say in Manila, would produce more, as I described. We try to match that the best we can. But in terms of the 18 countries, many of those countries none of you here has ever heard of. It's an island where.... We have three countries where nobody has ever applied. Essentially, we have five countries, really, where we have a lot of applications, which was described by Michael a bit earlier. None of them really has a critical mass to create a new office.

One option we're looking at is actually to create one in Ethiopia. It's a space issue. Significant investments have to be done within the embassy, and when we want to increase our presence we always have to take that into account. We need a place, a physical plant, where we can add staff.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Yes.

I noticed that you have created some initiatives: up-front file triage, looking at getting temporary resources, etc. There's this whole computer-based processing now, at least centrally. When do you think that would arrive at your Nairobi office?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: Since late last fall, all the files for, let's say, priority family class cases are created in Canada. So whenever Nairobi starts to process them, the input of the cases has already been done. We've done that for every mission. Some will benefit more than others, and that's certainly the case for Nairobi.

Those types of initiatives are happening as well more globally, if I can say. In order to have, as much as we can, all the work that can be done in Canada done in Canada.... That's an example; since the application is here, we can input the data, and it's being done in our office in Sydney. We work on a two shifts type of thing. That's one thing.

Second, Nairobi has changed some of their processes, as you described. They issued twice as many visas for priority cases than they did the previous year. It went from 700 to 1,400, and we're aiming at 1,700 next year. So the long processing time that we have now we certainly hope is going to be cut quite drastically this calendar year.

• (0925)

Ms. Olivia Chow: Thank you.

If the file is created in Canada, with all the MPs phoning occasionally because of the backlog, your office in Nairobi probably may not have the facilities to deal with these kind of requests.

Have you considered having it centralized in Canada so that you would then obtain the information from the Nairobi office in one shot with 10 cases from 10 MPs rather than each MP calling the Nairobi office separately? Wouldn't that actually help streamline the process?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: We do have a centralized process, as you know.

Ms. Olivia Chow: I do know that, yes.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: There is a service in Ottawa that is used by members of Parliament to ask for information on cases. They have access to the same information as Nairobi, actually. So the information you're getting from the ministerial services centrally in Ottawa is essentially the same as you would get from Nairobi.

It does happen that questions are asked of both different offices. We do prefer when it's done in Canada, mainly because in order to answer from Nairobi we're taking resources away from processing to answer the questions.

With the global case management system, we have more information available now for new cases. Today we're implementing it in Hong Kong, which means that we'll have only five or six offices in the whole world where we will not have GCMS.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Ms. Chow.

Ms. Grewal.

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

Mr. Boekhoven, thank you very much for your time. Certainly your job is not an easy one, but thank you very much for all you do on behalf of Canada and Canadians.

In your opening statement, you said that the regional insecurities make it difficult to complete your job successfully and in a timely manner. Can you please tell us in detail what kind of regional insecurities affect the region? In what ways does that affect your work at the mission? Would you also please tell us how it impacts the application processing time?

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: Thank you for that.

It's a large question. I can go individually down the list, but a couple of examples will suffice.

Somalia is acknowledged globally as being a failed state. Civil documentation has not been available from Somalia for at least 10 years. The passport is readily available from vendors throughout Nairobi, if you would like to have yourself designated as a Somali national.

That's an extreme example, to be sure. Nevertheless, there are others.

The Congo, as you know, has undergone recently a very severe civil conflict. Gross violations of human rights continue. The United Nations released a report—I think it was late last year—outlining a massive violation of human rights in eastern Congo that had occurred in the previous four or five months or something like that.

Rwanda underwent its genocide. Burundi had something that was remarkably similar.

Those are the types of insecurities we talk about. Unfortunately, the democratic institutions, the various political processes that have been chosen are still being tested; although there are elections, they are fraught. Even in those areas where you would expect a little more stability, there's still an awful lot of insecurity that's quite evident.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: In your area of operation, fraudulent documentation is quite common among economic class applicants. This could include false bank documents, educational documents, and employment letters. What steps have you taken to overcome these issues? Could you also tell us what documents you rely on? I'm looking for that type of information.

• (0930)

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: What we've done to address the challenges...[*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. Let me say from the outset that the challenges we face in this area are much less with the...[*Technical difficulty—Editor*]...movement.

The movement from Mauritius, which is the main source of our federal skilled workers—not the sole source, but the main source—is relatively straightforward and has a very adequate civil infrastructure. Where we find challenges is mostly in the family class, and occasionally with the refugees. With refugees, we don't normally get a good corpus of documentation to review. For those applicants, we rely almost exclusively on interviews to try to tease out their stories.

For the family class, however, we rely extensively on civil documentation. Sometimes we have difficulties with certain issuing offices. We recently were assigned an incremental resource, an anti-fraud officer. One of the Canada Border Services Agency officers was assigned. The position came in around 2008. That is exclusively looking at fraud and anti-fraud measures. That officer has undertaken extensive regional travel to learn the state of civil documentation and to establish partnerships with the authorities that issue civil documents throughout the region. That work is still under way. With 18 countries, it is quite a lot.

We use those partnerships to verify documents where necessary. We have a bit of a database we are starting on problematic offices. We tend to see fraud focused in certain areas. We're focusing on documentation in those areas.

Those are a few of the measures we take to address fraud.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Could you also tell us to date how many files you have in your mission from all over those 18 countries? Do you have a number?

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: I don't have a firm statistic. I know that we're processing somewhere around 12,000 applications for permanent residence. That's the total in our inventory for all stages of process.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Chair, do I have more time left?

The Chair: You have about a minute.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: I'll pass my time to Mr. Uppal.

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

I'm going to follow along with the same thing. Kenya is a home to many refugee camps, such as Dadaab, which is actually the world's largest refugee camp. How does the number of refugees in Kenya affect the number of immigrant applications received at the mission?

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: The impact, I would say, is marginal. We receive refugee referrals from the UNHCR for the government-sponsored refugees. On the privately sponsored side, however, we receive a number of applications from sponsorship agreement holders. Basically, they submit applications as they are presented. We manage our output through the targets. Because of the balance between all categories, it doesn't have a direct impact on other immigrant categories.

Mr. Tim Uppal: Thank you.

The Chair: You still have time—about 30 seconds—so if you don't want it, I'll take it.

Mr. Tim Uppal: My next question would take too long. That's fine.

The Chair: I'll ask the indulgence of the committee to quickly ask this question of both our witnesses.

You obviously have some very serious difficulties. You've outlined them well, and I think we understand what those difficulties are. We're here to make recommendations to Parliament.

Can you give us...? I can't believe you haven't studied possibilities to improve what your problems are. Do you have recommendations to the committee that would improve very serious problems?

That is for both witnesses.

Mr. Gilbert, perhaps we could start with you.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: We don't have exactly the type of research that Mr. St-Cyr was describing. That doesn't mean we're not analyzing the issues in order to try to resolve the question of wait times.

Of course, the wait that is linked to a target is more related to the intake control. The fact that we've initiated intake control with regard to a certain line of business has actually had a significant impact on —

● (0935)

The Chair: I'm more interested in what you recommend that Parliament can do.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: The main issue of having intake control on areas where we can is by far what would have the most impact on processing time. It's true for skilled workers. It's true for privately sponsored refugees, for instance, which is another area where we're trying to reduce the number of applications...or have a better match between the number of applications with regard to the output that we are allowed to...to proceed.

The Chair: Mr. Boekhoven, do you have anything to add?

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: I have to say, probably no, I don't have anything to add. I think Mr. Gilbert has outlined one of the main blocks.

I can illustrate that with a point by saying that, for example, the number of privately sponsored refugee applications that we have had here has essentially skyrocketed over the past two years or so. With the help of the refugee branch at Citizenship and Immigration, and with the incredible flexibility of the service agreement holders, we have been able to limit the intake of privately sponsored refugees. Nevertheless, in the past two years the damage to our inventory has been such that we now have an inventory of approximately seven and a half years' worth of privately sponsored refugees in our inventory.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lamoureux, welcome to the immigration committee. You have up to five minutes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Thank you. I'll try to keep it quick.

You had made reference to the provincial nominee program.

I guess my question would be for the program manager, and perhaps Mr. Gilbert could also provide comment on it.

Under the provincial nominee program, there is a requirement in terms of settlement moneys. Sometimes it's estimated around \$10,000, plus \$2,000 for each dependant. The question I have is in regard to the settlement moneys. If they have family members—and I'll use Manitoba as the example—living in the province of Manitoba, does it really matter where that settlement money is? For example, whether it's in Hilbre or in the Philippines, is it okay for them to have the settlement money here in Canada, or is there an expectation that they must have that settlement money in the country of origin when they're coming through the provincial nominee program under the economic class?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: I should probably reply to that.

The funds that you are describing are what we ask from any applicant who does not have a sponsorship of some kind in order to make sure they will have enough money to support themselves for that year. If they have relatives, if there is no undertaking of any type that would force that individual to help the new migrant, we have to ensure that the new migrant starts with the financial capacity in order to settle. Even if they have family members, there is no undertaking of any shape that is signed with us. We cannot have a guarantee that they'll have support when they're here.

That's basically the rationale.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: What if there is an affidavit of support that is given from the family member in the province?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: For the family members, for instance, depending on the category.... For parents, there is an undertaking that for 10 years they will support their parents when they're here. So there is a guarantee that we, or the province, will not incur costs related to the fact that someone came to Canada without the necessary adequate financial support.

With provincial nominees or any categories where they are independent, if I could say, there is no such undertaking.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Very specifically, let's say I am sponsoring, through a provincial nominee program, my brother in Nairobi or the Philippines. If I say, "Look, I have the \$10,000 here; it's his money, he can use it, and I'll sign a piece of paper saying that", is that individual then required to have that money physically located in the country, whether it's Nairobi or the Philippines?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: The provincial nominee is essentially an independent movement. Some have relatives. Some provinces have created a program where they favour relatives, but currently in the legislation there is no legal base for it.

The Chair: Monsieur Wrzesnewskyj.

• (0940)

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

Mr. Boekhoven, when my colleague Mr. Oliphant was talking about this terrible case of the Sudanese family that's been languishing for over 10 years in a refugee camp after escaping the war in Sudan, you made a comment in regard to the processing of refugees that I found quite telling. Your wording was that the numbers are in excess of our needs.

What's worrisome about this is that in the case of refugees, I would think that the determinations would be the needs of the refugees. Are they in harm's way? Are their lives in danger? What is the condition of the camps that they are languishing in? There is a spectrum of conditions in those particular camps.

So there are two parts. Could you please answer, number one, how do you establish your quotas on refugees, and is it politically determined here in Ottawa for you?

The Chair: You're giving him 30 seconds to answer.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Number two, you mentioned that one of your officials has travelled through the refugee camps. Have you established a table? Do you have a report that provides the conditions of those families in those refugee camps, the various refugee camps that he's visited, whether there are refugees from Sudan, or especially in Kenya, not that far away from where you're located; has he visited the Somali refugee camps that are located in Kenya, and do you have a report on the conditions within those camps?

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Wrzesnewskyj, we're over the time.

Mr. St-Cyr.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...on paper.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Chairman—

[*English*]

The Chair: Just a moment.

What did you say?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Chair, in consideration of the time, perhaps Mr. Boekhoven could provide to the committee those details and that information, especially from the official who travelled to the camps.

The Chair: Mr. Gilbert, is there any problem with that?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: It's just that some of the questions are policy questions, and Mr. Boekhoven has no impact on which target he's going to get.

The Chair: We're going to go on.

Monsieur St-Cyr.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Gilbert, you raised the issue of movements within this immense area. This still leaves me a bit confused. We talked about the issue of the large area and the number of countries covered.

In the past, I've often raised the issue of centralizing file processing in Canada. I was told that we had to be close to people, have offices, be able to take advantage of being located near people. However, here we have a case where proximity is entirely relative.

Wouldn't it be better to take that logic to its conclusion? Rather than have a single office that handles an enormous area such as this one where there is no real proximity, we could have a number of offices that would actually be near people and would handle all the issues that must be addressed in the field. We would also repatriate everything we could to Canada.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: First, I'll clarify the issue of the immense area covering 18 countries. In China, we have two offices covering virtually the same area as that covered by the Nairobi office. You can't focus solely on the geographic boundaries of that part of Africa.

As far as possible, we try to perform all administrative functions in Canada. Our new system will enable us to do that. We have also started to do that on a larger scale for administrative functions.

As regards knowledge of local characteristics, expertise has developed over the years. Mr. Boekhoven talked about a specific trip, but in fact a number are being done. Expertise has been built up over the years. Two or three times a year, officers from Nairobi go to Uganda. A quantity of information has accumulated over a number of years. That would be harder to do if we covered the entire planet from the Canadian office.

So local knowledge nevertheless helps, especially in view of the fact that the vast majority of applications come from five countries in the region.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Yes, sir.

Perhaps I could request an undertaking from Mr. Boekhoven to provide us with the report from the Citizenship and Immigration official from the Nairobi office who visited the various refugee camps.

• (0945)

The Chair: Sir, is that possible?

Mr. Michael Boekhoven: We have numerous officers who travel throughout the region going to a number of refugee camps. There are two principal ones in Kenya; one is Dadaab, and the other is Kakuma. We have teams over there in order to do that. I get trip reports, but there's not much that would respond to the—

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj, I don't think it's a point of order, and it doesn't sound as though you're going to get an undertaking, so I'm going to suspend.

• (0945)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (0945)

The Chair: We'll reconvene the meeting.

Mr. Gilbert, could you introduce our next witness from Taipei?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: I'd like to introduce my colleague Sean McLuckie, who is working in our office in Taipei.

The Taipei office deals with applications received essentially from Taiwan.

Without any further delay, here he is.

The Chair: Welcome to the immigration committee. What time is it over there?

Mr. Sean McLuckie (Immigration Program Manager, Taipei, Taiwan, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): It is approximately 10:50 at night.

The Chair: I hope we don't keep you up too late.

Okay, sir, you have some introductory comments to make to the committee on wait times in Taiwan?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: I do, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: You can proceed, please.

Mr. Sean McLuckie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm honoured to speak before the committee today. As mentioned, my name is Sean McLuckie, and I'm the immigration program manager at the Canadian trade office in Taipei.

I'm somewhat concerned that I may run long; the committee members may find that I deviate somewhat from the prepared notes.

Before providing an overview of the processing times here in Taiwan, I would first place our visa office in its wider context. Falling within the north Asia area network, Taipei is a full-service centre, and responsible for the delivery of the immigration program in Taiwan. Compared with offices like those in Nairobi and New Delhi, the visa section in Taiwan is quite modest, both in terms of its size—with 11 full-time staff—and in terms of the territory and population it serves.

In another point of key contrast—which has been mentioned—the programming integrity challenges that are faced in Taiwan are generally much less vexing. I would ask committee members to keep this in mind as they consider our respective presentations.

• (0950)

[*Translation*]

Now I'll address the issue of temporary residence applications processing.

While Taiwanese have historically visited Canada in very large numbers, this number has been declining—

[*English*]

I'm sorry; is there some way to cut off the translation to my monitor? It's feeding back to me.

[*Translation*]

All right, I'll do my best.

So I was saying that this number has been steadily and significantly declining over the past decade. Still, over 33,000 temporary resident visas were issued in Taipei in 2010.

TRV applications...

Is there a problem?

[*English*]

The Chair: No, I hope we've solved the problem, sir. If we haven't, you let us know. We'll do our best.

Mr. Sean McLuckie: Okay. Thank you.

[Translation]

TRV applications from Taiwanese have historically been low-risk and uncomplicated, with over 99% of cases approved by the following business day. Against a backdrop of consistently low rates of refusal and refugee claims, the Government of Canada announced a visa waiver for Taiwan on November 22, 2010.

The waiver decision necessitated significant workforce adjustments in the visa section; 55% of the locally-engaged staff complement was laid off in December 2010.

[English]

Study permit processing in Taiwan is relatively uncontroversial. Of the more than 1,500 applications received last year, fewer than 1% were refused.

Given the very low refusal rate, clients identified as needing medicals are immediately issued instructions upon file creation. This practice has allowed this office to process cases relatively quickly, with 71% of cases finalized within 14 days.

[Translation]

Work permit applications are relatively more challenging. In large part, this is because they are an offshore movement, with only 40% of applicants in 2010 being Taiwanese. Almost 56% of applications received in 2010 were by nationals of the Philippines.

[English]

Accounting for more than one-quarter of the work permit total, nearly 800 live-in caregiver applications were received in 2010. As you may be aware, the LCP is often targeted for abuse. As such, it's routinely necessary to request additional documentation, to hold interviews, and to conduct verifications. Fraud is regularly identified, and is the primary driver of 2010's 12% LCP refusal rate.

[Translation]

In terms of other work permit categories, it is worth noting that last year saw the launch of a youth mobility agreement between Taiwan and Canada. Called International Experience Canada, or IEC, the program saw about 700 work permit applications processed in 2010.

[English]

Work permit processing times in Taipei remain well above the global average with only 31% of cases finalized in 28 days or less. Against a backdrop of medical requirements for Taiwan and noting the complexity of the LCP cases, it's not anticipated that a significant reduction in processing times will be achieved in 2011.

That said, it's hoped that practices such as reducing the window of time allotted to applicants to perform medicals will serve to deliver a modest improvement.

Before turning to an overview of permanent resident processing in Taipei, I'd mentioned that non-immigrant processing is highly seasonal. In 2010, three-quarters of the temporary resident visas and two-thirds of the study permit applications were received in the five-month period from April through August. Also, the IEC program quota is open at the beginning of each calendar year, resulting in a flood of work permit applications in January. The seasonality

necessitates that the office resources be allocated primarily to non-immigrant processing during the peak periods.

During permanent resident processing, I would say that with the exception of the decline in inventory of pre-Bill C-50's skilled worker cases, Taipei does not have any real permanent resident backlog to speak of. Family class cases in Taipei are generally straightforward and have a very low incidence of fraud. In this context, we were able to process 80% of spousal cases and partner cases within six months in 2010. For dependent children, 80% of cases were processed within four months.

[Translation]

Sponsored parents and grandparents are subject to globally-managed targets. Of the cases finalized in 2010, 80% of cases took 20 or fewer months to process. With a reduction in the levels allocated to Taipei for 2011, processing times in this category are expected to grow. This said, the visa waiver makes it even easier for parents and grandparents to visit loved ones in Canada while their cases are in process.

Turning now to our skilled worker movement, I am pleased to say that headway has been made in reducing the number of cases awaiting processing in Taipei. Whereas there was over 1,100 such cases at the end of 2008, there were only around 600 at the end of 2010. Our current inventory is comprised almost entirely of pre-Bill C-50 cases and includes applications lodged between April 2007 and February 26, 2008.

● (0955)

[English]

Notably, there has been significant reduction in the number of new skilled worker applications out of Taiwan. While over 600 applications were received in 2007, fewer than 90 were received in 2010. This low intake of new applications has allowed Taipei to keep a good number of pre-Bill C-50 applications moving through the pipeline.

In 2010, pre-Bill C-50 applications accounted for approximately two-thirds of the skilled workers visas issued. Continued progress in reducing pre-Bill C-50 inventory will occur in 2011, and it is expected that pre-Bill C-50 cases will account for approximately one-half of the skilled worker visas issued.

Finally, I know that the committee is interested in hearing about Taipei's investor movement. In 2010 we finalized 302 federal investor cases, which is roughly 9% of the global total. Of these, 80% took 22 months or less to process. This is down from 23 months for the cases finalized in 2009. As with skilled workers, Taiwan has been processing more applications than are coming in. In 2010 fewer than 200 new investor applications were received. By the end of quarter three last year, only 324 applications remained in inventory. Working with the expectation that the number of applications under the new investor regulations will be significantly below pre-change levels, continued reductions in processing times are anticipated in Taiwan.

[Translation]

Having provided this broad overview of operations in Taipei, I would emphasize that we are well placed to deliver our service commitments in 2011.

[English]

I would gladly answer any questions that the committee might have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McLuckie, for your presentation. There will be some questions from the committee.

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you, Chair.

I notice that the target for 2011 for family class reunification in Taipei—this is from the ATIP document we became aware of a couple of weeks ago—has a total of five. The numbers in 2010 for three-quarters of the family reunification, parents and grandparents, was 20. There is no backlog.

Do you expect there's going to be a significant drop down to five? Why would you set a target at five when last year the numbers were higher? Does it decrease the appearance of the overall numbers the department produces on that particular category? What is the thinking? It doesn't seem to match what the requirement was last year.

Mr. Sean McLuckie: If I may, I would first of all clarify that I believe the numbers to which you refer are preliminary targets; they've already been adjusted up to 30, for example. As has been mentioned in the prior testimonies, targets are adjusted throughout the year.

Having said that, of the parents and grandparents, last year we finalized our target of 80 cases. This year we don't have that many clients and inventory. At the present time it looks as though the notion of 30 targets will be what we can achieve.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: My next question is to Mr. Gilbert.

It appears that the target isn't that far off and there is movement to make adjustments. Your official has said there's a good chance these quotas that were set by your department in this January document will be adjusted.

I raise the issue of Warsaw, which also had a target for parental and grandparental reunification of only five. The numbers of parents and grandparents, in 2009, for instance, was 158. There's real

concern that the number of five was perhaps pulled out of the air to once again just plug a number in.

Since your last appearance here, have you adjusted the numbers for parents and grandparents who would like to be reunified with their families in Canada, from five to a number that more closely reflects what's happened in the past?

• (1000)

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: We don't base targets on what has happened in the past. We look at the applications we have in the inventory, what stage they are at, and how old the applications are from a particular country.

For instance, in the case of Warsaw, we don't have any applications that are older than 2009. In other countries, we have over 10,000 applications from before 2009. We try to concentrate mostly on the older inventory.

That being said, in the case of Warsaw, we had many applications that were far advanced in the process and we didn't want them to have to redo their medical. The last time we changed the information was January 31—we do that about 10 times a year—and the current target in Warsaw is 60.

The Chair: Mr. Wrzesnewskyj, just to remind you, we're in Taipei.

But go ahead, it's your dime.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: If I could add one thing, there was no overall target. Those 55 were taken away from somewhere else.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you, Mr. Gilbert.

You just referenced a document you have in front of you, which is the revised targets as of January 31. Could you please table that with the committee so we could all have access to that?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: Okay.

The Chair: We have a problem. Where's our man?

Stop the clock for a moment.

Are we having a break, or what's going on?

An hon. member: Our witness has gone.

The Chair: Well, we'll have to go with Mr. Gilbert. I don't know where our witness in Taiwan has gone.

Start the clock again, please.

It's never dull in this committee.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Our witness from Taipei has left us. So perhaps we'll continue on with Warsaw, because it was of tremendous concern to many Polish Canadians.

We also had a tremendous concern when it came to the target of 25 that was set for Kiev.

Could you tell us what the readjustment has been for parents and grandparents for 2011 out of Kiev?

The Chair: Mr. Dykstra on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I understand Mr. Wrzesnewskyj's request on this issue, but we have people here on video from Taipei. Could we not stick to the topic at hand so that we could move things forward?

The Chair: You know, it's a valid point of order, Mr. Wrzesnewskyj. If you want to get Warsaw in here, we'll get them in another day. These witnesses are prepared to talk about Taipei. They're not here prepared to talk about Warsaw.

I think it's a fair point of order, so please stick to Taipei.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Absolutely. I hadn't realized that the witness had come back.

Since he is back with us, in regard to Taipei, Taipei has a highly skilled workforce. It is a highly developed economy. It seems that they could provide the types of immigrants that Canada would especially want, yet we've seen a significant drop in the number of applications.

Is there anything that your office could be doing to encourage some of the numbers toward what they were as recently as two years ago?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: In terms of the immigrant applications, there's been a long-standing decline. If you look at the numbers out of Taipei—or at least from Taiwan—in the mid- to late-1990s, it was around 12,000 or 13,000 immigrants a year. This has, as you mentioned, declined significantly and steadily. This in part reflects the increased confidence in the economy and opportunities here in Taiwan.

The Taiwanese have also been looking elsewhere. They've been looking to the mainland. They've had a measure of relaxed ties; there are over a million Taiwanese actually doing business on the mainland at the present time.

The movement, in terms of its interest in Canada, and the push factors that drive it and the pull factors that bring it to Canada, is in flux. Whether more could be done to attract them to Canada, I am not entirely sure. The opportunities for most Taiwanese are actually quite good in Taiwan in terms of the skilled worker movement.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Does this mean that you'll be looking at decreasing the staffing levels and the resources that you have at your disposal in Taipei?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: In effect that has actually already occurred. The cuts that happened in December went beyond the actual cuts required, let's say, just on the visa waiver itself. They reflected a decline in the investor applications and the skilled worker applications that have been coming out of Taiwan.

• (1005)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McLuckie.

Monsieur St-Cyr.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I was interrupted during my last speech by a pseudo-point of order, I hope you'll be flexible and allow me to continue with my question for Mr. Gilbert, as it concerns Nairobi.

We were talking about the differences between centralizing and decentralizing applications processing. I understand his explanation that expertise is developing in the field, locally. However, couldn't we consider that, if we had more missions for the same geographic area, we would have more specific expertise? He cited the example of China, but the fact remains that, from a geographical standpoint, it's a single country. There are regional variations, as in any country, but the fact remains that the situation is the same. It also seems to me that Somalia, Rwanda and other countries served by the mission can present completely different worlds.

If we had even more missions focused to a greater degree on certain countries, wouldn't we develop more specific expertise?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: You're right. In an ideal world, we would have more points of service and more local information. What is difficult, however, is that, for a functional office, we need a sufficiently large critical mass. In a number of places, in Nairobi, for example, if we applied the rule that we should have a specific minimum number of officers, we would have five offices with one and a half officers each. It's very difficult to do that, of course. In many cases, we nevertheless keep two officers. Currently in Taiwan, we shouldn't have as many employees; there should be one or two fewer. However, we become less effective as soon as we fall below a certain threshold.

That's essentially the justification, the reason why we want to move certain administrative classes to Canada. That could also give us flexibility when there are sudden increases or decreases, as quite often happens.

For example, Sean noted that, over the years, Taiwan has had a constant decline in the number of applications. However, all it takes is for a few warships to arrive from continental China off the coast of Taipei for the number of applications to suddenly explode. We have previously seen that in the case of Taiwan.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: With regard to Taipei, you mentioned in your presentation that 320 federal investor cases had been finalized. The document submitted to us refers to 187 applications in Taipei. So that means that the number of cases you finalized is much larger than the number of applications received from investors. Is that correct?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Do you expect to maintain this rate in order to further reduce investor wait times?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: Wait times are minimal for investors. We may have to lower the targets. That's been done in the past.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Of that number, 23 applications come from Quebec's immigrant investor program. I believe that the 320 applications finalized were solely under the federal component. In 2010, how many applications did you process that at been processed by the Government of Quebec and subsequently referred back to you?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: In 2010, we approved 21 applications, whereas we had received 38.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: In the case of the federal program, you processed more applications than you received, whereas in the case of the Quebec program, you processed fewer applications than you received. What's the explanation for that difference?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: It's just a question of receipt of applications. We stopped receiving federal investor applications in June, I believe. The Quebec investor applications continued to arrive until August or September. In fact, the people decided to file their applications in Quebec, not elsewhere.

• (1010)

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: So you process applications from previous years. I understand there isn't necessarily a connection between the two.

We communicate with the people working for Quebec's immigrant investor program, and they often tell us that people have the perception they're being asked to do the same thing twice. In the past, we asked the Government of Quebec to do more work verifying the legitimacy and source of funds. Nothing was being done at the time. Now a validation is done. If my memory serves me, 98% of applications from Quebec are ultimately accepted. However, those same people tell us that, when their application is submitted to the federal government, the entire process has to be started over again, that is to say the source of funds is verified again and they are questioned once again about the entire file in a different form, which takes a lot of time.

[English]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: The clients and the people they work with have the impression they're being asked the same thing twice. What efforts are being made to avoid this kind of situation?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: I would say that doesn't often happen now. There are of course some situations where that occurs, but Quebec officers generally do a good job and the applications we receive contain the information we need. I would say we don't very often request any new information.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Davies, welcome back.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you very much.

The Chair: You have some questions.

Ms. Libby Davies: Yes, I do.

The Chair: You have up to seven minutes.

Ms. Libby Davies: Thank you.

I'm sorry I didn't hear the presentations, but I have just been reading through the presentation given by Sean McLuckie.

I want to begin my questions by asking about the targets for the parent and grandparent class.

You mentioned in your comments "a reduction in the levels allocated to Taipei for 2011". My understanding is that for parents, it's gone down to five—that's the projected number—from 80 applications, I think it is.

So we're down to, supposedly, only five applications, but I note that you also say in your remarks that "processing times in this category are expected to grow". I'm just curious as to what that means, given that we're going down to five.

I have two questions: one, why is it going down to five; and two, why, then, would the processing times be expected to grow, and how long will that processing time be?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: The first answer is that the notional target of five was immediately modified to reflect what we actually have in inventory. Having said that, new applications still come in. At the present time what we have in inventory at any stage of process of the FC4 cases is 24 cases. That amounts to a little bit over 30 individuals, maybe 32, 33. So depending on how many actually apply through the rest of the year, they may or may not have their cases processed. But the fact is that for at least a few of them, they will get processed this year. If you compare it to previous years....

Ms. Libby Davies: Go ahead.

Mr. Sean McLuckie: Compared to some previous years, the statistics are a bit deceiving. The processing times for our FC movement have actually been generally pretty good. Again, we've been processing more than have been coming in.

Do you remember when I said—maybe you weren't here—the applications in the mid and late 1990s were 12,000 to 13,000 Taiwanese a year? These people have already sponsored their parents. With the declining number of people who are applying in recent years, a declining number are sponsoring their parents.

So to be honest, yes, this year, immediately, some cases won't get processed, but this is nothing comparable. It is not a disaster. We're talking maybe a year.

Ms. Libby Davies: Thank you.

I'm still not clear, though, how the number five was established. There used to be, I believe, 80 who were approved, so how we got down to five, and how that number is selected, is just not clear. It seems incredibly low. Again, it's just not clear to me how, if we're dealing with such a low number, if that's what it ends up being, the processing time would actually increase, unless you're saying that staff resources are going to other classes or other elements of the program.

• (1015)

The Chair: Monsieur Gilbert.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: I think I should answer this question. I am the one who picks the targets; it's not Sean.

We reduced it in order to give it to other missions that had applications where processing was longer, in order to reduce the processing time where it was longer and where we had larger inventory. For instance, we have increased significantly the target for China. Part of it came from Taiwan. What we hope is that it will reduce the processing time in China, where we have a far larger number than we have in Taipei, and far older applications. In Taipei we have the applications, as Sean described, that are processing very recently. They just submitted the applications. We still have a lot of applications for parents and grandparents: 1,700, 1,800 in China. That is why we do transfer target space from one mission to the next, in order to help the other mission.

The processing time is going to get longer in Taiwan because their target is lower, and it's going to get shorter in China because we increased the target. There is a match between the two.

Ms. Libby Davies: Could you say how many applications there are now—that are either in process or sitting in a stack somewhere—from Taiwan for parents?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: For Taiwan, parents and grandparents, as of December 31 there were 37 people, so that's probably about 10 or 12 families.

Ms. Libby Davies: Do I have time for one other question, Mr. Chairman? Yes.

I just wanted to follow up on the investor program. I know that it has also gone down, and the processing time has gone down, from the remarks that have been made this morning.

I just wanted to ask, though, when a case has been processed and an investor has gained status to come to Canada, etc., what kind of follow-up is there in terms of the investor program to ensure that the commitments are being made in terms of the investment? Or, if there are problems, then I just wonder if you could give us an idea of what verification or follow-up happens once the applicant is in Canada.

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: I don't have all the details, but the amount of money that has been invested in Canada is divided using a formula to the provinces that participated. Quebec has its own program, but all the other provinces are getting the money. They are investing it in all kinds of services they are providing to the population. After five years they have to reimburse part of it to the investor, so essentially what the provinces are getting is equivalent to the interest on that money. The follow-up is done with the provinces, not with the individual investor.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Wong.

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

[Member speaks in her native language]

Thank you very much again for talking to us in the middle of the night. I definitely know the challenges because of the time difference.

I have quite a few questions.

In November 2010, Minister Kenney announced that travellers from Taiwan would no longer need visas to travel to Canada. I have two questions related to that.

First, in what way has the waiving of the visa requirement affected your mission to better serve the applicants?

Two, how will this help reduce the immigration application process wait times for family and investor-class applicants?

I have other questions, but I'd like you to handle those two first.

Mr. Sean McLuckie: To answer your first question, the primary advantage is that the applicants don't have to see us. They can proceed directly to Canada and there's less friction in their movements. Additionally, if it's a family they're not spending \$400 Canadian to get the visas.

Certainly we're confident that it will increase the ease and hopefully desire of people to travel to Canada, whether for pleasure, to visit family, to attend short-term schooling—for many reasons. So in that sense it's a removal of friction.

On how this will affect processing times, it really won't. It will reduce the impact on processing times, but even this will be relatively minimal. We were approving more than 99% of temporary resident visa applications. So when a person had an application in process to immigrate, they could still go to Canada to visit loved ones. They could still get a study permit or a work permit. So the visa waiver itself won't really affect the processing times.

• (1020)

Mrs. Alice Wong: In 2009, the Canadian trade office in Taipei approved 99% of the more than 25,500 visitor visa applications received. In the same year, 51,000 travellers from Taiwan came to Canada on some form of temporary status.

Canada's periodic review of its visa requirements found that there were low numbers of immigration violations by Taiwanese nationals, and few removals from Canada. Can you talk about the process for removing visa requirements and why Taiwan was a good candidate for that?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: I can talk about part of the process. Basically, what occurred is what we call the technical visit. The visit actually happened before my arrival at the mission, but they looked at a number of factors, as you mentioned—refusal rates, enforcement rates, and refugee claim rates.

They also looked at the issue of document security: what was the integrity of the Taiwanese passport or the Taiwanese passport application process? There were other factors, such as information sharing on passport information, or other enforcement-like matters. A number of factors were considered in total. Then my understanding is that recommendations were made and partner ministries were consulted. But perhaps Régnald can speak more to this.

Mrs. Alice Wong: In your opening remarks you also stated that one of the challenges you encounter is integrity of documents, especially in the application for work permits. Then you noted that not all of them were actually nationals of Taiwan. You probably get applications from people who were originally from the Philippines.

What are the steps taken by your mission to ensure that documents of applicants are accurate and reliable?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: There are three general steps we take. First, we have built familiarity with a lot of the documents we see from the Philippines—and we are talking about the Philippines. We're talking primarily about two types of things: education documents, and to a lesser extent work experience documents.

In terms of education documents, we have a database of transcripts of records or diplomas that we've sent to be verified and have been confirmed authentic. So we actually have scanned copies of these that we can use as references.

We also use interviews in a targeted fashion. To a certain extent they're by telephone. If we want to actually confirm that someone has studied as they have claimed, sometimes a quick phone call will suffice. Sometimes it's necessary to have the individual come in person.

The third method—which is frankly the most time-consuming and onerous, not only in terms of our own resources but the resources of Manilla, which very graciously assists us—is to have verifications conducted with the schools. This uses the resources of Manilla, but it also uses up the goodwill of the schools. Depending on the school, it can sometimes be of limited utility. But those are the three general methods.

Mrs. Alice Wong: My next question is directed to Mr. Gilbert.

You mentioned that some of the resources have now been moved to countries where there is a big backlog of inventory, so comparing Taipei to Beijing. The global management system that is in place right now—how much has it helped you to really solve problems like that, such as moving some area resources to where the needs are greatest?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: We're still at the beginning, I must admit. As I described, I think Hong Kong, for instance, got online today. And most of the missions got it since November. We started a bit earlier, but now that is the case.

It allows us...because all the information that is entered in one place is available immediately at the other place. It means that for the case of a file creation for a spouse application, if the file is created here in Ottawa, for instance, immediately all the information is available at the mission—let's say in Taipei.

There is still a gap. We're still working with paper applications, unfortunately, so we still have to send it to Taipei. When Taipei gets it, all of the information will already be in the system. It moves to the next step already of first analysis in the decision-making. So we skip one of the issues.

With regard to resource allocation, in the case of Taipei, for instance, because we removed the visa we had to lay off a number of employees. All those positions were reallocated in the system, many of them to Africa, actually: to Dakar, Cairo, and Nairobi, for

instance. So whenever that happens—and it does not happen often—where we actually have positions that are freed up, it allows us to increase our capacity, if there is room, where we have the strongest point of pressure.

• (1025)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Wong.

Mr. Lamoureux, you have up to five minutes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I want to pursue the visa issue in the sense that when Taipei was still issuing visas, do you have a statistical number you could provide the committee as to the numbers that would have been rejected of those that were actually applying at the time?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: Off the top of my head, I can say that last year it was fewer than 200. Of those, I don't know statistically how many were actually from Taiwanese, but I would say very few. It was probably about 160 out of 27,000 applications—less than half a per cent.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: So when you make reference to determining whether or not a country would lose its visa requirements, would that be the primary role or the primary statistic to look at, the refusal ratings or percentage?

Maybe Mr. Gilbert...

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: Yes, I could answer that.

It's a combination of a number of indicators. That's a very strong one. Once the refusal rate is below 3% or 4%—don't quote me on that, but it's something in that range—that's one of the factors. We could provide the information from our policy sector.

Another factor would have to do with the number of refugee claims from that...countries. Then there's how many removals we had to do for various reasons, whether it's non-compliance to immigration issues or with regard to criminality, for instance.

So it's a combination of indicators that allow the government to essentially make a decision to remove a visa or, in reverse, to impose a visa as was done for the Czech Republic and Mexico two years ago.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: What about the actual impact when you remove a visa requirement? Is there any sense in terms of the number of people who would be coming to Canada to visit compared to the time in which you had a visa requirement? I would think there would be a significant increase. Is there any sort of statistical analysis done to find out to what degree we have more people coming to visit Canada as a direct result of dropping the visa requirement?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: Statistics Canada publishes those statistics on a regular basis on the number of visitors from a particular country. In the case of Taiwan, we were issuing long-term multiple entry visas so the same visitor could come with the same visa a number of times. This data is not accumulated by CIC, but Statistics Canada does collect that information.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Okay.

What would have been the number one reason for turning down a visitor visa in the past in Taipei?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: Generally speaking, it was fraud. Sometimes you would get surprising situations. We did a quality assurance exercise in the past summer on Taiwanese applicants. Out of basically just over a hundred cases, we had one incidence of confirmed fraud where the person provided fraudulent bank statements. Then we had two other incidences where the documents provided were suspect, but we couldn't confirm categorically with the bank that they were fraudulent.

Generally speaking, it was fraud. In other instances it was adverse prior history—they had been to Canada before and had been naughty. Sometimes the reasons for travel as stated categorically did not make sense. That is very rare.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Maybe Mr. Gilbert might be able to provide comment on this in terms of Asian countries where, from my understanding, 80%-plus of the visiting visas are being rejected because of the fear that the individuals would not return to their country of origin. Obviously that is not a concern in Taiwan. In other Asian countries it appears to be the case.

Are there statistics on that? Are there ways for people to address that issue?

• (1030)

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: I don't have it with me, but the information you provided is incorrect. We approve 80% of the applications globally. It varies from country to country. In China it is over 80%. In the case of India it was roughly 76% or 77% last year.

It varies from country to country, but the approval rate is much higher than you suggest in most countries. The average globally is 80% approval.

The Chair: Monsieur St-Cyr, you have the floor. You have a choice; you can proceed with your motion, or you can have five minutes of questions and answers.

I don't often give choices, but in your case I do.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: I will split my time with myself, then.

[*Translation*]

I'm going to ask you one final question, and then we can deal with the motion.

Under the immigrant investor program, the Government of Quebec already validates the source of funds. When the Government of Quebec asks you to process a file that has been approved, do you once again validate the source of funds or do you take the validation for granted? Don't you just do the remaining part of the security check and medical check?

Mr. Sean McLuckie: It's up to us to make the decision regarding eligibility. That also includes the source of funds. The documentation is already there, with the application. Sometimes we request the notes of the people at the Quebec office so that we can see what they've determined with regard to the source of funds. Generally, we have the documents and are able to make the decisions ourselves.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: So you check the source of funds a second time.

Mr. Sean McLuckie: We do it from a somewhat different point of view, but we're indeed the ones who make the decision regarding

eligibility. It's more a matter of the criminal aspect than of the source of the funds.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: All right, thank you.

Now I'll turn to my motion. May I do that now?

[*English*]

The Chair: Sure. Let me just dismiss the witnesses.

Monsieur Gilbert, I want to thank you and your colleagues from Kenya and Taiwan for coming and helping us with this issue. We appreciate your presentations.

Mr. McLuckie, thank you to you too, sir.

Monsieur St-Cyr, you have a motion. Could you read the motion into the record?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Of course, Mr. Chairman. It reads as follows:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) of the Standing Orders, that the following be reported to the House at the earliest opportunity:

That, while it recognizes the exclusive jurisdiction of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) to establish the list of drugs covered by the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP), the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration recommends that the government rapidly reach a formal IFHP agreement with the Association québécoise des pharmaciens propriétaires (AQPP).

That the Committee recommends furthermore that CIC immediately conform to the terms of the temporary agreement, reached on February 2, 2011, which provides for the processing of claims from all AQPP members, including those that have not individually registered with Medavie Blue Cross.

Mr. Chairman, with regard to the first part, it's quite simple: the committee has already held two meetings to discuss this situation. I believe the government has every interest in reaching an agreement with the AQPP. Other partners of the Interim Federal Health Program have already done so. As stated on the program's website, they include, in particular, the RCMP, National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada. There are also the aboriginal issues that are Health Canada's responsibility. CIC is named there as a partner, in the same capacity as those other organizations. So there is no justification for not reaching this kind of agreement.

This not only goes without saying, but it also works to CIC's advantage. It enables it to deal with one single entity representing 1,800 Quebec pharmacists. It will no longer have to register 1,800 individuals separately since the pharmacists are required by law to comply with the agreements entered into. Consequently, although a large percentage of refugees are in the Montreal region, this kind of agreement would enable them to obtain these services at a pharmacy if they are passing through the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, for example.

I think you have to respect the fact that there is a union of owner pharmacists in Quebec. It was Mr. Wrzesnewszky, I believe, who pointed last time that the government's attitude was like an attempt to break the union and to negotiate individually, which, in my view, is a purely ideological approach. The government has every interest in proceeding differently.

As for the second part, the government entered into an agreement with the pharmacists on February 2, one day before our committee met, and that put an end to the pharmacists' ability to bring pressure to bear. However, the testimony of a number of pharmacists indicates that the agreement has not been complied with. The pharmacists are still being asked to register individually, which is not consistent with the agreement or with what has been explained to us here. Individual registration is the issue in the current dispute between the two parties. We get the impression that, by forcing the pharmacists to register individually, the government is trying to present them with a *fait accompli* and to tell them that it ultimately doesn't need to negotiate with them.

I believe the motion is balanced. It acknowledges that CIC determines coverage and that all that is of interest to the pharmacists is the mechanics, repayment procedures and disputes.

So I invite committee members to support it.

• (1035)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Dykstra.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Chair, I would like to speak to the motion in two parts. I would like to speak to the motion and I would like to put forward some potential amendments to the motion.

I think there are some parts of the motion that the government is prepared to support from the committee perspective, but there are portions of it that are somewhat contrary to the actual work the ministry is engaged in with the pharmacies in Quebec.

Most important, I want to quickly comment on the issue of union-busting. I couldn't help but smile when I heard that, because it's actually contrary to what the department is trying to do in terms of working with the pharmacies.

The issue at hand here is that to ensure the pharmacies are reimbursed in a timely manner and according to the parameters of the interim federal health program, the pharmacies are required to register.

The Chair: Excuse me.

I understand the rule is that when the bills are ringing—I guess there's going to be a vote in 30 minutes—I need unanimous consent to continue for a short period of time.

Do I have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: It is agreed.

Mr. Dykstra, you may continue.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Thank you.

I think that's really the issue at hand; regardless of how the negotiations move forward, there is the requirement of the individual pharmacies to register with the ministry. It's been pretty clear, based on the presentation and the questions asked when the representatives were here from the association, that this is not a process they support. I can understand that. They would like to be the face, if you will, that deals directly with the ministry. Then they could go back to

the individual pharmacies to point out the successes they have gained in negotiations. That's typical of any type of bargaining. But this is not typical bargaining.

This is a funding relationship that the ministry needs to have directly with the pharmacies. The department is not interested in union-busting. The department is not interested in trying to develop hundreds of individual relationships. They need the ability, when a claim is put in on behalf of a refugee, to work through the third party, which is Medavie Blue Cross. They'll resolve whatever concerns might arise between the individual pharmacies. They can do that, I guess, through the association, if they so desire. But this is a practical approach that is used across the country in all other provinces and territories.

Having said all that, I understand some of the concerns that have been pointed out by Mr. St-Cyr. Interestingly enough, on the weekend I was in Montreal and was speaking with a couple of pharmacists on Saturday evening. We talked about a great number of things, but this wasn't one that they brought up as a matter of huge concern.

In any event, if this compromise is acceptable to the mover, then I think we would have certainly the government's support for the hope and the desire and the wish that these two parties continue to discuss, and that we are able to work through a fair and reasonable approach to this issue.

It would read, as follows, that, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) of the Standing Orders, the following be reported to the House at the earliest opportunity:

That, while it recognizes the exclusive jurisdiction of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) to establish the list of drugs covered by the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP), the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration recommends that the government and the Association québécoise des pharmaciens propriétaires (AQPP) proceed as quickly as possible to resolve outstanding issues; and

That the Committee recommends furthermore that CIC and AQPP continue in the interim to conform to the terms of the temporary agreement, reached on February 2, 2011, which provides for the processing of claims from pharmacists in Quebec.

• (1040)

The Chair: Mr. Dykstra, I think I get the gist, but to be sure that the clerk has the appropriate wording, please give the clerk your proposed amendment in writing.

Is there debate on the amendment?

Monsieur St-Cyr.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: I understand the government's willingness to move the issue forward. Unfortunately, I believe this amendment is unacceptable. Its aim is precisely the opposite of what I'm advocating, and I believe the other opposition parties will agree on that point. There is no reason to wonder why that would be different in Quebec. It's different in Quebec because it's different. That's all.

This works well with National Defence, with the RCMP, with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and the Department of Veterans Affairs, so I don't see why it wouldn't work just as well with CIC. I'm going to recommend that members vote against this amendment, which completely dilutes the entire intent of the motion.

[English]

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Oliphant and then to Mr. Dykstra.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This may be an opportunity for the parliamentary secretary to help me understand this a little bit better. I heard good intent, and now I'm hearing a concern, so I'm actually a little confused on this and sort of struggling a bit to understand it.

It seems to me that the intent of the original motion was to put the onus on the government to reach an agreement. It seems that the shift in the actual amendment is to take the onus off the government to reach an agreement and to put it on both parties.

I'm predisposed to saying that in an agreement, both parties should be involved. That is to the benefit of the people of Canada, who are footing the tax bill. It's also of benefit to the pharmacists to be involved in that negotiation so that the power doesn't shift.

I'm going to ask the Bloc member to comment on that as well.

It seems to me that the pharmacists would want to be involved in that negotiation so that it's more like mediation and consultation as opposed to becoming almost like arbitration, when we end up getting to tell the government to do this.

I'm happy to tell the government to do many things. I'm predisposed to telling them, but I'm more predisposed to conversation.

As I said when we saw the witnesses here, my concern is not for the pharmacists, and it's frankly not for the CIC. My concern is for the refugees who need to get drugs and for the people of Quebec who need to make sure that people with infectious diseases are actually being treated in a timely manner. If we don't have an infectious disease treated because someone can't get the drugs, because the person can't pay for them, that's a concern to me for public health reasons.

I want this agreement to be reached quickly. I like the intent of the original motion, but I'm also liking the intent of the government's amendment, which looks like it's attempting to bring parties together to the table so that something is not imposed.

I need to confirm that this indeed is the real intent of the government member's motion.

I also need to know if I'm missing something from the original proposer.

• (1045)

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Dykstra and then to Mr. St-Cyr.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: I actually appreciate the request for clarification that Mr. Oliphant is making. Let me use his example as a way to respond.

He indicated that he has no issue with telling the government what to do in particular cases. From an opposition perspective, I completely understand what he is referencing when it comes to that point. When the opposition objects to or disagrees with the direction the government is moving, it is their right to oppose that and to suggest an alternate policy direction or an alternate direction in terms of where the government is going. I understand that on a macro level

that's exactly the type of relationship the government and the opposition are supposed to have. In fact, the opposition is often challenged to bring forward better ideas and see where we can go with them.

The fact is that this is not on a macro level. This is a micro-level issue. While I can appreciate that Mr. St-Cyr wants to see a resolution, this is a micro issue within the Department of Citizenship and Immigration we are dealing with here at the table. I'll put that aside for one moment.

We are going to involve ourselves in a micro-level issue that is the responsibility of civil servants, who are paid and accept responsibility for implementing this program in particular, and our recommendations and government legislation in general. I would say to my colleagues opposite in the Liberal Party that this amendment I'm recommending is one that does not involve us directly in the negotiations as elected officials, or the board of directors, if you will. We are simply making a very clear statement that both the ministry and the association that represents the pharmacists should be sitting down to continue to work to come to the end goal of a resolution. That gets to exactly what Mr. Oliphant has stated, which is about the delivery of service to Canadians and the delivery of service to refugees in the province of Quebec.

I don't see anything wrong with an amendment that suggests that the parties need to get together to come to a solution. What I don't support and what the government doesn't support is a unilateral recommendation, which is within Mr. St-Cyr's motion, that unilaterally orders the government to come to an agreement on the terms. In fact, that's impossible to do when both parties have to negotiate what that agreement is going to consist of.

I'm asking Mr. St-Cyr to see his way clear to supporting the amendment. If not, I'm going to ask the opposition parties, outside of the Bloc, to defeat his motion and to support the amendment I put forward here at the table. I believe it speaks to a resolution that we can all live with.

• (1050)

The Chair: Okay.

I'm told this vote is going to take place at 11:08. It's up to the committee, but I'd like to dispose of this matter today, so I'm just putting you on notice that this meeting will end at 11 o'clock.

Monsieur St-Cyr.

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: In my view, the original motion does not at all represent micro-management, on the contrary. There is no determination at all of what is expected from the agreement. The motion states that we want the two parties to sit down and come to an agreement.

As a committee, however, we want to set a direction for public policy in that this agreement should draw on those previously reached with the other four government departments.

As regards Mr. Oliphant's question concerning the two parts, the only reason why the motion states "recommends that the government" is that a committee normally makes recommendations to the government.

That said, if the amendment were to be defeated, I would be prepared to accept another one that would state: "asks the government and the AQPP to reach a formal agreement under the Interim Federal Health Program". I believe the amendment moved by the government, the aim of which is ultimately to remove this possibility from any agreement with the AQPP, is unacceptable. That will work to the detriment of refugees, since a lot of owner pharmacists in Quebec will not register. This conflict could well be perpetuated. Refugees will therefore have to start shopping, going from pharmacy to pharmacy to try to find which ones are registered. However, if a formal agreement were reached, whatever it might be, refugees could go to any pharmacy.

I therefore invite you once again to vote against the government party's amendment.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Chow, on the amendment.

Ms. Olivia Chow: I don't support the amendment. I support the original motion, because Quebec, unlike the rest of Canada, has an organization, the AQPP. It has members. We should respect that. It has been formed, and there's no reason why we would not respect its established policies and its practices. The motion itself does not impose an agreement. It basically said "rapidly reach a form of

agreement". Just encouraging them to reach an agreement doesn't say the agreement should be A, B, C, D, E, or F. I would definitely oppose that. It's not imposing. It's just saying to the government do this, and do it quickly, and in the meantime, make sure no one is left behind, which is the intention that everyone supports anyway.

So I don't see why we should support the amendment in front of us, because it eliminates the mention of AQPP, the organization of Quebec.

The Chair: Is there further debate on the amendment?

All those in favour of the amendment?

(Amendment negatived)

The Chair: Is there further debate on the motion?

All those in favour of the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Critics and parliamentary secretary, we have a subcommittee meeting at 12:30 at the Promenade—somewhere.

The meeting is adjourned.

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