



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

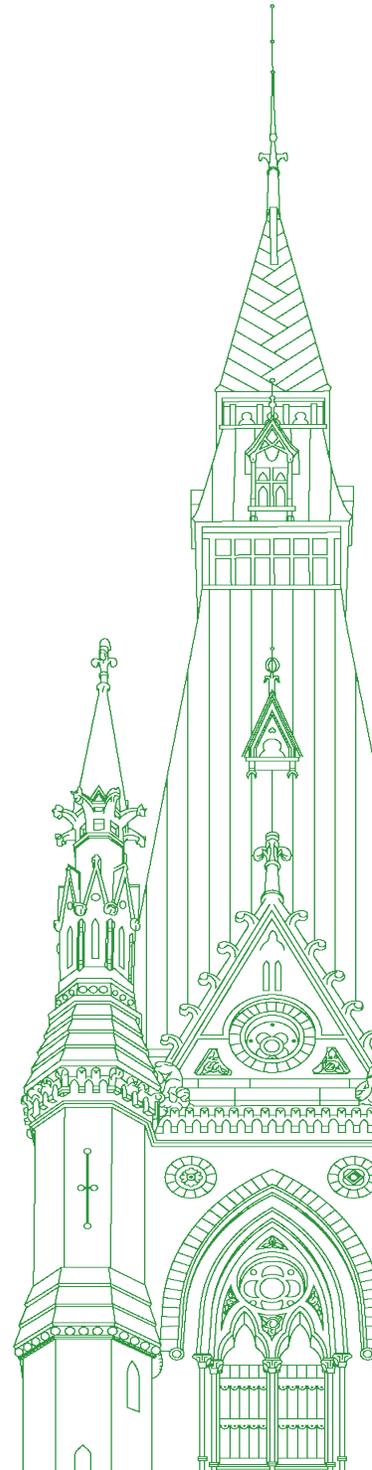
Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 019

Tuesday, May 3, 2022

Chair: Mrs. Salma Zahid



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• (1140)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Good morning. Welcome to meeting number 19 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations from the health authorities, as well as the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on Thursday, November 25, 2021, to remain healthy and safe all those attending the meeting in person are to maintain two-metre physical distancing and must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room. It is highly recommended that the mask be worn at all times, including when seated. Those attending must maintain proper hand hygiene by using the provided hand sanitizer in the room.

Please refrain from coming to the room if you are symptomatic.

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair. When you are not speaking, your microphone should be on mute and your camera must be on.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we will continue our study on differential outcomes in Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada decisions.

I would like to welcome our witnesses.

We have today as witnesses officials from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration: Caroline Xavier, associate deputy minister; Tara Lang, director general, central network; and Farah Boisclair, director, anti-racism task force.

Before we go on, Ms. Kwan is raising her hand.

Go ahead, Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Before we begin, I would like to raise a concern with officials and ask for their explanation and response regarding the situation.

During a meeting held at this committee on February 15, which was on processing timelines and acceptance rates, I made a request to IRCC department officials to table, by the end of that month, a breakdown of application backlogs in all streams. When I made that request, Mr. Daniel Mills, the senior assistant deputy minister of operations, said, "I will be happy to provide that information because I have it here on hand."

Even though Mr. Mills clearly indicated that he already had the information on hand and I requested that the information be tabled by the end of the month, it took 44 more days after the deadline for that information to be tabled. The committee received it on April 13.

However, nearly a month before IRCC's response to the committee, the CIC News website published tables that were provided by IRCC in response to a media request in March. These contained the exact same breakdown requested by me at the committee meeting. The data IRCC provided to them was also more current, with updated figures as recent as March 17, 2022, while the information provided to the committee was current to December 31, 2021.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice notes:

The *Standing Orders* state that the standing committees have the power to order the production of papers and records, another privilege that is rooted in the Constitution and which is delegated by the House. In carrying out their responsibility to conduct studies and inquiries, standing committees often have to rely on a wide array of papers to aid them in their work.

It is therefore extremely concerning that IRCC is providing timely responses to media requests while withholding document requests—which an IRCC official explicitly said were already on hand—from this committee, which has a legal mandate to study its affairs. This constitutes, in many ways, a breach of privilege by preventing parliamentarians from being able to do their work.

I should note that it's often clear that the text of previous IRCC responses were written shortly after the request was made but took months to make it to the committee. I'm interested to know who was blocking that and why there was such a delay.

Madam Chair, I would like to ask officials to table a response as to why it took so long to provide information they said they already had to the committee, while providing more up-to-date information on shorter notice in response to media inquiries. I ask them to also provide a timeline indicating where the document was held up, why the document was held up and any email records relating to responding to that request. I would like to get a response regarding IRCC's delay in sending documents requested by this committee until the information is out of date, while more quickly providing more up-to-date information in response to the media.

This is not acceptable, Madam Chair. We have officials coming before us whose job is to answer our questions and accept undertakings, per a motion. If this is the approach they are taking, it is not good enough. I want to state that very clearly.

I would like to get a clear explanation from officials, tabled to the committee, as to why this happened. Furthermore, Madam Chair, I have a list of items for which I am still awaiting responses. I painstakingly put together a binder of all the undertakings that I have requested from officials. I have a series of them for which I have yet to receive a response.

I can put all of this on the record, unless the officials have actually tracked them to see where the responses are. We're supposed to get this information so we have it in advance of writing our reports. In many instances, that deadline passes and we don't have that information.

• (1145)

We're now into another study with respect to differential treatment. This is all kind of related, so it is absolutely essential that we get this documentation before we begin that work. Otherwise, we will not have sufficient information to proceed. That's a disservice not only to the committee and our members but also to the community that is waiting for answers, Madam Chair.

I will ask for your direction on whether I should read into the record the list of all the items that I have not yet received or whether officials will actually track that information down and provide it to us in a timely fashion.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kwan. With regard to the request you have made, for which the information has not yet come, the clerk has prepared a table for me. I will get in touch with the department and follow up and make sure that those requests that are still pending are processed as soon as possible.

Let me consult the clerk on how we'll deal with your other question, and I will respond.

Ms. Kwan, if you can read into the record the undertakings that you are still waiting for, we will have the department respond on those. Thank you.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

All right, then; I will read into the record the pieces that are still missing.

This was my question to officials:

Is the minister still exercising his authority to bring in special procedures secretly?

This was in reference to Afghan processing. I indicated that I was being very specific:

I'm not talking about general immigration measures. There are some specific actions that the ministry is taking that are not made public. People do not know what those specific actions might be, what it would look like or whom it would apply to. Is that still being done by the ministry right now?

I would like to get a response, then, from the minister or from the department with respect to that. That's a request that I've made and have not received a response on.

The other piece I asked for reads as follows:

Ms. Campbell Jarvis told us at committee that there is an IRCC playbook used as a level of oversight for bias in IRCC. Could the officials table this playbook and also provide documentation or information on how it is being used by officials?

That has not yet been received.

There was another document:

To what extent has IRCC processed the emails that Afghans were directed to send to the government? In other words, how many of those emails have received a response from IRCC, and how many are being processed? By response, I don't mean the automatic response they get.

I also asked this:

Perhaps I can get the officials to send those numbers in...If I can get in detail for the committee the numbers [of] how many applications have been processed, how many of them have been completed, and how many of them are still waiting for completion, I would appreciate it.

That has not yet been received.

I continued:

What about the applications for people who are not interpreters or collaborators, which is to say those who may have family members who are here in Canada and who have connections that way? If any of those are being processed at all, how many...?

I asked:

If I could get those specific numbers, not "half"—

which was the response I got,

—but exact numbers and under which category, that would be appreciated. Perhaps [that] could be submitted to the committee then.

That has not yet been received.

I asked this as well:

Could the officials provide a breakdown of that representation right now, so that we have a baseline on which to evaluate the outcome of this work?

I asked if we could get the baseline number so we could evaluate the progress, and further to that, if interim progress reports would be put on the public record. I have not received a response.

If you're wondering, Madam Chair, what I'm referring to in terms of that representation, it's referring to equitable representation amongst staff at IRCC, both agents and among medium and upper management positions. One of the key issues is to actually have a baseline of evaluation so that we know where things are. If there's going to be improvement or changes down the road, we need to be able to see it. I have not received that data, or the committee has not.

I asked for other information:

If you can table for the committee, then, the timelines of when that further study will be done and the mandate for those studies, I would appreciate [it].

That is in reference to independent studies. Ms. Caroline Xavier had explained to the committee that "further independent studies" were being planned on this strategy. I would like to know the timeline with respect to that. I have not yet received a response to those questions.

The other issue is that I have asked officials to provide the pathways to the committee. The pathways are in reference to a question around Afghans and other racialized minorities that are in Ukraine. As it stands right now, as far as we can tell, the immigration measures do not apply to them. The special Ukraine immigration measures do not apply to them. I asked this question, and Ms. Caroline Xavier responded that “the options and pathways exist for them to be able to indicate that, and we would be able to assist them”. I was asking what pathways, and for the officials to table that. I have not yet received that information.

• (1150)

Those are all of the undertakings that... Sorry, there's one more. There's one last piece that is missing. It asks for the work being done by the department to coordinate and facilitate the generosity of Canadians who wish to help Ukrainians arriving in Canada. I was asking for information with respect to that, and we have not yet received it.

Those are all the undertakings that are still to be provided to the committee, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kwan.

Is it possible for the officials to respond to the issues and concerns raised by Ms. Kwan?

Ms. Xavier, would you like to say something about this?

Ms. Caroline Xavier (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): I really take note of the undertakings and the comments made by the member of the committee with regard to the outstanding undertakings. I can assure you that there is no way that we are trying to be preventive in doing this. We will ensure that the undertakings are responded to in a more effective and quicker manner.

I have many more answers. If the member would like, I could proceed to answer throughout the session today, which could be another way to get some of those responses sooner rather than later, if that's helpful.

• (1155)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you. I'm going to respond to that.

These undertakings were asked for prior to this committee, and they should have been provided to this committee. Just now we heard from the officials that they can provide us with the information as we engage in this meeting. I have six minutes, Madam Chair, to question officials, and time runs just like that, and then if I'm lucky, I might get another round.

It's simply not acceptable. Here we are with yet another example of officials saying on the record that they have the information, but somehow, and I don't know why, they have not presented it. With this kind of practice, we are heading directly into a question of privilege being breached. I hope that is not the case. I hope that I can get full answers and acceptable answers from the officials. I hope that this practice will not continue.

More to the point, how is it possible that committee members ask for information that staff say they have readily on hand, and it's not provided to us after 44 days from the request? That information is

then provided to the media, and it's more up-to-date information to boot. Goodness gracious, what are we doing here?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Xavier, I would request that all of those undertakings for which the committee is still waiting for answers from the officials be provided as soon as possible. If the information is there, for the functioning of the committee, it would be appropriate if those answers are provided to the committee members as soon as possible.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Absolutely, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Kwan, please go ahead.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: For clarity, Madam Chair, I really want to know who blocked the information. I don't believe it was staff. I think someone else is blocking that information. I would like to know who blocked that information. Who made the determination to delay the tabling of the information that staff said, on the record, that they readily had available?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kwan.

I've requested that the officials provide the information to the committee members as soon as possible. I will follow up with the clerk. We will make sure that we follow up with the department to ensure that the information is sent to the clerk of the committee as early as possible.

We can now go to the opening remarks by officials. You will have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Ms. Xavier, please proceed.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon.

I am pleased to join the committee, and I would like to take a moment to acknowledge that the land from which I'm joining you today is the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation.

As associate deputy minister with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, I recognize there is no institutional tolerance for racism or discrimination and that IRCC must be committed to diversity and inclusion.

[*Translation*]

To inform the committee how the department is pursuing this principle, I'd like to look back at what we have been accomplishing recently through our anti-racism initiatives.

[*English*]

I want to add that I have personally noticed a shift this year at IRCC. We have delved deeper into more complex aspects of racism, and many more participants have respectfully but frankly challenged the practices of the government and the department than had been the case in past years.

For example, on February 11 we held an IRCC all-staff session to discuss systemic racism within IRCC policies and programs. It was one of the few times I've seen people talk so openly about the history of systemic racism and its lasting impacts on our programs and policies, specifically the temporary foreign worker program. It felt like we were finally confronting systemic racism in our own backyard, acknowledging it for what it has been.

[Translation]

On February 18, we held an employee town hall with guest speaker Dr. Rachel Zellers—a lawyer and scholar who focuses on race and diversity—as a chance to discuss vocabulary for leaders to use when faced with resistance, ignorance and questions relating to race.

[English]

It certainly was an event with profound timing, given the police actions against the protests in downtown Ottawa that were taking place that same day.

Also in February, we joined with colleagues from Global Affairs Canada, The Department of National Defence and the Department of Justice to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and to hear from Dr. Robert Livingston of the Harvard Kennedy School.

As well, we have taken action through various trust circles with indigenous, Black and racialized employees, in addition to trauma workshops and other gatherings, to give participants the opportunity to share their experiences with leaders, such as myself, without fear of reprisal.

We are also employing disaggregated data collected at IRCC. It provides us with the ability to clearly spot disparities and to set a baseline from which we can measure progress so that we can see if we are actually addressing systemic biases that may affect not only our employees but our clients, policies, decisions, and service delivery.

All this is more than just talk. I am convinced that our actions to address anti-racism are producing results and that our employees at IRCC are developing a new competency to examine our business lines and processes through an anti-racism lens.

● (1200)

[Translation]

This tells me change is beginning—that behaviours and our culture are evolving. Of course, we are all at different points in our journeys to learn about racism.

[English]

However, I believe that all employees and especially leaders in the organization are truly understanding how fundamental diversity and inclusivity are now, and will be, to achieving our mandate.

[Translation]

Reaching these conclusions about race may be difficult and uncomfortable, but we must address them, because some employees at IRCC still feel they face systemic racism.

[English]

Madam Chair, looking forward, the next phase for IRCC will be to build on these efforts by pulling the pieces together into a departmental strategy and action plan with performance indicators to hold ourselves accountable. We hope to release the next phase of the strategy and action plan to employees and stakeholders by the middle of 2022.

In addition, IRCC has developed a quarterly anti-racism tracker to monitor the department's progress and to transparently report on it to employees, deputies and the minister, who has expressed a keen interest in keeping abreast of our collective efforts.

[Translation]

Madam Chair, I do want to stress to the committee that our work at IRCC is still a work in progress. And as we move forward with it, we will continue to be flexible and we will strengthen diversity and inclusion in our workplace and workforce.

[English]

The key principle is that achieving greater diversity and equity is not only the right thing to do, but it is the smart thing to do. We have an obligation to our employees and to all Canadians to do better, and we will.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Xavier.

We will now go to a round of questioning.

Before we begin, I just want to bring to everyone's attention that yesterday we celebrated Eid and I brought baklava from Scarborough for everyone. Members and the staff should have a bite. This is one of the success stories. This business, Crown Pastries, was started by a Syrian refugee family in Scarborough a few years ago, and now that's the best place for baklava in the GTA, so please do try it.

We will start the first round with—

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

I am unable to enjoy the baklava here in Saskatoon. How can we rectify that?

The Chair: Let me know when you are in Ottawa. I will make sure to bring it with me.

Mr. Ali, you've raised your hand.

Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Yes, Madam Chair. Mr. Redekopp has asked the same question. I was thinking of it. You brought it there. It should have been mailed out or maybe a courier service should have been provided to the members who are not in person there.

The Chair: Everyone can enjoy it next time.

We will now go our round of questioning. Our first member is Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Genuis, you will have six minutes. Please begin.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

To those members who are complaining about not having access to the excellent food, I'd say, "You snooze, you lose." I'll be thinking of you while I eat it.

I want to highlight in my remarks the issue of transparency. Some of our concerns on that have been well articulated by Ms. Kwan. There's some additional information, and a number of witnesses have told us that in terms of understanding the problems of racism within IRCC, it's very important that they have data to look at.

I'm going to ask a series of questions. I'm not asking you to provide the answers to these questions; I'm asking you to tell me if you are able to provide these documents in writing. Hopefully the answer will be yes. I'll then be able to proceed through this list.

The first thing that we have been asked for by witnesses is any and all documents and data in the department's possession that show acceptance and rejection rates for visa applications, broken down by processing office, application category, country of origin of the applicant, race and religion. Are you able to provide that data to the committee?

• (1205)

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Thank you for the request.

We are able to provide an answer to that data. What I want to add as a caveat is whether or not I can break it down to the level that you've asked for with regard to granularity. We would have to get back to you, but we can definitely tell you the rates of rejection and acceptance as you've requested, to a certain level.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

To clarify, what I'm asking for is not the provision of data that you don't have, but all of the data in your possession that relates to that question.

I think a 30-day timeline is reasonable. Would you agree that for these requests a 30-day timeline is reasonable?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Yes, I think that should work.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

We've been asked for a list of which visa offices currently use advanced analytics to triage applicants, and which applications they are used for. Are you able to provide that in the same time frame?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I am able to provide you with what applications are using advanced analytics. The part that I'm less certain

about is whether I can tell you which offices use them, just because the applications are more centralized, and then various officers use them across the country and the globe. It may not be specific to an office, if you see what I mean.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. All the questions should be directed through the chair.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair.

For clarity, we're looking for information about which analytics models are being used and where they're being used.

The next request is for any quality assurance reports for each advanced analytics model that is being used by a visa office. Can that be provided?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, we are able to provide information with regard to our quality assurance framework and we are able to provide some reports of some of the quality assurance activities that have taken place in the department.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Can you provide the current instructions to decision-makers regarding the implementation of the advanced analytics pilot model for any processing centres that are using advanced analytics?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: As we've previously mentioned to this committee, Madam Chair, we have a framework in place that helps us to put in place an advanced analytics model. We're able to share that playbook. It is available and it gives us the guidance with regard to advanced analytics, assuming that's what is being sought by the member.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Can you provide any training manuals or reviews regarding Watchtower and a list of all priority flags that have been used by Chinook, as well as Chinook+ and GCMS Chinook user manuals?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I'm not sure I understand the question exactly. I don't know that we have watchtowers or flags in manuals per se. Perhaps some clarity could be provided on that question.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: My understanding is that there are priority flags that are used as part of the advanced analytics modules. Many witnesses have asked for lists of those priority flags, as well as user manuals related to these documents.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, as I mentioned, we will definitely be able to provide and share the playbook that is provided with regard to the guidance of how we set up advanced analytics. What we will be able to share is which applications are using advanced analytics. As we've mentioned before, advanced analytics are used when we have a repetitive and simplistic analysis of information. It is not used to make decisions.

Again, I'm cautious to respond by saying that we have a document that talks about flags, because I'm not sure if one exists. However, I can always ask my colleague Madame Lang if there's additional information she'd like to provide on that, if that's helpful.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You know what? I can come back to this on my next round of questions.

For my final minute, I'd like to share my time with Mr. Seeback, who wants to provide a notice of motion—not to move a motion, but to provide a notice of motion.

I'll resume these questions in my next round. Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Seeback.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Hi, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to be back at this committee and to see some of my former colleagues.

I am going to give a verbal notice of motion. It is

That the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration report the following to the House: significant delays in citizenship applications over two years risks disenfranchising Canadians who are waiting for their citizenship in order to vote. This issue is particularly urgent in light of the June 2 Ontario provincial election. The government should move quickly to address this issue so that all Canadians who are eligible for citizenship and who choose to apply are able to participate fully in our democratic life. In light of the situation, the committee requests a response from the minister, by letter, by May 20, outlining the actions taken, and further actions intended.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you.

The time is up for Mr. Genuis. Now we will proceed to Mr. El-Khoury.

You have six minutes. You can begin, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to welcome the witnesses. I thank them for being here to answer our questions.

My first question is for Ms. Xavier.

During the course of this study, several witnesses mentioned that IRCC funds fewer settlement groups that provide assistance to newcomers and racialized immigrants than settlement agencies with broader mandates.

Can you tell us more about IRCC's settlement funding policy?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I thank the member for his question.

More than 500 agencies help us provide assistance to newcomers to this country. These agencies have an agreement with us in which the funds that we have given them and what they are to be used for to give assistance to newcomers are very well defined.

That said, we also do an evaluation on a regular basis of how services are being delivered. Through the established governance, we keep a very close relationship with them. Also, depending on how the newcomer is doing in their community and how the communities themselves are doing, we have the opportunity to talk to the

agencies to see if the goals and objectives, as we had defined them in the agreements that we signed, have been met.

In each of the agreements, the expectations are very well detailed. So is the funding and what we expect from it in relation to the objectives.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Could you tell us more about the factors used to assess the authenticity of a relationship in family reunification or sponsorship applications?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I thank the member for his question.

The types of relationships that constitute family relationships are very clearly outlined in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. There are very clear protocols as to how to identify family relationships and how to ascertain the existence of the relationship.

There is also a program in place to ensure the integrity of the way programs are delivered to newcomers. As I mentioned earlier, we do evaluations fairly regularly to ensure that expectations and goals are being met. We even survey newcomers to see if the expectations they had when they arrived or the promises that were made to them have been met.

We combine all of this information, including the act and the guides we provide to our agents, and we do an assessment to make sure that the newcomers' relationships are legitimate and that the help they receive is legitimate.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: My next question is for all of the witnesses.

Given the labour shortage and the fact that one study says that a high percentage of immigrants are not chosen for their economic potential, would you please elaborate on the socio-economic challenge of labour and immigration and make a recommendation?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I thank the member for his question.

I could not make any recommendations off the top of my head. However, I can say that, through surveys, studies, analyses and with the support of newcomer organizations, academic institutions and institutions that do research in the field of immigration, we are in the process of assessing and understanding, with our colleagues at Employment and Social Development Canada, the importance of ensuring that immigration demands meet labour needs.

This is part of what we analyze to put in place the immigration plan, which is reviewed and tabled annually in Parliament. By having discussions with our provincial and territorial partners, we make sure that we understand the challenges and where the gaps are so that the immigrants coming to Canada can meet the economic needs primarily, but also the social needs, and so on.

• (1215)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: My last question is for Ms. Boisclair.

Several witnesses have mentioned the possibility of an intersectional approach within our immigration governance apparatus.

Can you give us your opinion and explain this in more detail, or even make a recommendation to translate this concept into public policy?

[English]

Ms. Farah Boisclair (Director, Anti-Racism Task Force, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you for the question, Madam Chair.

The department is working on a disaggregated data framework and working with its partners in Statistics Canada to be able to look at disaggregated data within our policy programs and services.

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up.

We will now proceed to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

You have six minutes. Please begin.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to raise a point of order now so I don't have to interrupt people a short while from now.

Since we have already taken the vote, is the committee meeting going to continue until 1 p.m., or 1:30 p.m.?

I think we have the resources to keep going until 1:30 p.m.

[English]

The Chair: We can go until 1:30 p.m. That's when we have to stop. It's a hard stop at 1:30 because we don't have services available after that.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Is everyone in agreement that we continue the meeting until 1:30 p.m.?

[English]

The Chair: Yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Perfect.

I thank all the witnesses for being here with us today to continue this important study and to help us write a report that will normally contain important recommendations for the ministry.

I will address Ms. Xavier.

In the brief submitted to the committee by the Association of Regulated Nigerian-Canadian Immigration Consultants, we are told of the ways in which Nigerian and other foreign students are treated differently.

I would like to know why the Nigeria Student Express, or NSE, program is not published on the IRCC website.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I thank the member for his question.

I'm sorry, I don't know why this isn't being published. Perhaps it is because it is a pilot project. However, I can assure you that it is not related to a transparency issue.

We make sure that the missions in the country are well aware of the existence of the program. The fact that it is not published is not deliberate on our part.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: If this group mentioned it in their report, it might be interesting for your department to publish the name of the program on your website.

Do you plan to review the eligibility criteria for the NSE program?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I thank the member again for his question.

We continue to evaluate the operation of all IRCC programs. Specifically, we could continue to evaluate our programs offered to students, especially the one related to the Nigeria Student Express.

This will certainly be part of our ongoing evaluation process, which is designed to check what criteria are in place and whether they are working well. It is also part of our overall anti-racism strategy where we are keen to ensure the quality of delivery of our programs and the achievement of the original stated objectives.

• (1220)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

I will stay on the African continent, if I may. The visa office at the Canadian Embassy in Dakar processes applications from 16 countries, representing a population pool of 276 million people.

Don't you see this as a problem? Isn't there an unconscious bias on the part of the department to begin with?

I'd like to hear what you have to say about this, because some people are telling us that this situation makes absolutely no sense.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I thank the member for his question.

It is clear that the volume is considerable, in general, in terms of IRCC. We are trying to reassess the situation and determine where our resources are and whether we need additional resources. There is a process in the budget for requesting resources.

That said, one of the things that we have improved and continue to improve in the department, especially since the pandemic, is how we move, reallocate resources and reallocate work around the world, rather than just to the mission where the request may have been received. We are again looking to ensure that the quality of information has been respected and that the law has been applied correctly. We also seek to respond more quickly and efficiently to needs.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Ms. Xavier. You tell us that you are evaluating this, but where is your evaluation of the Dakar office?

I think, quite honestly, that having only one office to serve a population pool of this size is likely to increase the refusals of visa applications, if only because officials are short of time. Indeed, those who process the files do not have the time to manage all this. Also, I wonder if this has the effect of increasing racist prejudice, given that this office is in Africa and handles 16 African countries.

Where are you in your evaluation of the Dakar office?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I thank the member for his question.

I can't say where we are precisely as to the Dakar office. What I am trying to say is that we do the evaluation and analysis of our processes on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I understand. You told me the same thing a few seconds ago.

Is the department currently doing an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Dakar office?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I can't say, because I don't know if we are doing an evaluation specifically of the Dakar office.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yet you replied to me just a moment ago that you were evaluating several offices.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Yes.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: You're giving me two different answers.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: No, what I'm trying to say, Madam Chair, is that in the normal course of our work, we do the evaluation of all our offices.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Does this include the Dakar office?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: The Dakar office is one of them.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Where are you in the evaluation of the Dakar office?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I could send the committee the information to clarify where we are with regard to the Dakar office, specifically. What I'm trying to say is that we do general assessments and analyses of how our offices are operating.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. Your time is up, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: We'll come back to that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: We will now proceed to Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Kwan, you will have six minutes. You can proceed, please.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you to the officials for appearing before our committee.

First I'd like to ask the officials about the Chinook tool. Are there any quality assurance applications in place for the Chinook tool? If yes, what are they? If not, why not?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: When Chinook was established, we did an assessment of the use of Chinook to ensure that it adhered to all of the Treasury Board guidelines and all of the necessary procedures that are required to respect privacy and things of that nature. There's not an evaluation under way at this point in time because it has already been done.

Just to be clear, I just want to make sure I'm answering the question that was posed.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

It is my understanding that when Chinook was deployed, the department actually had a number of different modules, including a sixth module, which was to deal with the quality assurance component. It was discovered that there were software bugs with respect to that, so then it was never applied.

One would think, then, that the department would go about fixing the bugs so that you would actually have an application of quality assurance to the Chinook system, but it sounds like there isn't. There have been significant concerns with the use of Chinook raised by witnesses, and understandably, then, the witnesses are calling for an independent assessment of Chinook.

It sounds like the department is actually not doing any quality assurance on Chinook at the moment with this application.

• (1225)

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, my colleague Madam Lang would have some additional information to clarify an answer to the member, if that's okay.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Maybe it could be a quick answer, because I have additional questions.

Ms. Tara Lang (Director General, Central Network, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just to be clear, Chinook is a tool that's designed to simplify the visual representation of information that is in GCMS, the global case management system.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Sorry, I'm going to interrupt here for a minute, Madam Chair. I'm asking for the quality assurance program, not how Chinook works.

Ms. Tara Lang: Absolutely.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Please don't give me answers on how it works.

Ms. Tara Lang: It is simply a system that an officer uses to make a decision. If we were to implement a quality assurance framework, which we have, it is on our officer's decisions. It would not be on the Chinook system itself, because Chinook does not keep any privacy information. It does not retain information from the global case management system. All of our decision-makers have quality assurance exercises that are used to complete the verification of whether the decision was correct or not.

On the question about the quality assurance system and the module itself, it was not simply a module within Chinook to do quality assurance but a way in which officers could also use the global case management system to identify flags to verify quality assurance exercises that were completed.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

Maybe I can then ask the officials, Madam Chair, to table to the committee their quality assurance program and its application for all of the tools that it applies to and how it is applied. Maybe the officials can also provide the data on what stream and what country these quality assurance programs are being used for and the results coming out of them.

With respect to the results, if, for example, the application of quality assurance is being applied and the results don't check out—you looked into it, and even in this instance with Chinook, with individuals making the assessment, the outcome does not check out—what are the next steps? Are applications then re-evaluated by someone else? How do the officials or the department deal with that? If I can get that information, then—

Ms. Tara Lang: Yes, absolutely. We can provide the background on the QA. I think that was asked previously by one of the members, so Madam Chair, that would be no problem.

In terms of reconsideration of quality assurance decisions, it depends on the line of business. There are different mechanisms that could be considered. There could be reconsideration of a decision by an existing officer. A decision could be reconsidered by a new officer. There are different mechanisms available if we find that a decision was made improperly.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Can we then get the information on how that is being applied, under what stream, and in what country, broken down accordingly?

Where there are concerns raised, I would like to actually know how often applications are re-examined. How often are they being sent to someone else for an examination, and then what is the outcome of that if the decisions differ between the original assessment and the reassessment by someone else? If I could get that data, it would be appreciated.

On the issue around anti-racism training, we had witnesses who came forward and raised the concern that on anti-racism training—and IRCC acknowledged that racism exists within the department—what needs to be done is not a module that people can go through, but really in-depth training. What kind of anti-racism training is being done within the department right now for its middle managers and executive-level staff?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: We're in full agreement that training in the form of online training in particular, or a module, is not the only mechanism or the only tool that is being used within the department, or should be used in order to improve—

The Chair: Sorry for interrupting, Ms. Xavier. Time is up for Ms. Kwan. You can come back in the second round.

We will now proceed to our second round. The second round will start with Mr. Redekopp.

Mr. Redekopp, you will have five minutes for your round of questioning. You can begin, please.

• (1230)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to come back to the issues raised by Ms. Kwan at the beginning of our meeting. I'm disturbed by the way the government is ignoring the will of Parliament and this committee by delaying, blocking and withholding documents requested by this committee. We just heard all about that at the beginning.

Just for some clarity, since I don't trust the department to respond in a timely manner, I would like to clarify Ms. Kwan's earlier request by verifying that the information requested by Ms. Kwan earlier in the meeting would be tabled by 4 p.m. on Monday, May 10. Is that clear, Madam Chair?

The Chair: Sorry for interrupting. You would like that to be tabled by this coming Monday?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Yes, by Monday, May 10. I think that's reasonable. It was indicated that the information is available.

The Chair: Ms. Kwan actually requested that it be within three days when she initially requested it, so I think we'll have to go by that.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: All right. That's fine.

The Chair: Please continue.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: I want to switch to talk about the production of papers motion, which directly relates to this racism study.

As you're aware, I put forward this production of papers motion back in February, supported unanimously by the committee, requiring the department to provide documents related to racism. The officials were given a deadline of March 30, which they complied with. However, until last week, we as committee members didn't know that the department had failed to comply with the rule of having to submit everything in both official languages. We had to get it translated after the fact.

The department also failed to abide by Parliament's absolute authority when it comes to examining original and unredacted documents. I just want to read a passage from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, at page 137:

By virtue of the preamble and section 18 of the Constitution Act, 1867, Parliament has the ability to institute its own inquiries, to require the attendance of witnesses and to order the production of documents, rights which are fundamental to its proper functioning. These rights are as old as Parliament itself...

As stated in a report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections in 1991:

The power to send for persons, papers and records has been delegated by the House of Commons to its committees in the Standing Orders. It is well established that Parliament has the right to order any and all documents to be laid before it which it believes are necessary for its information. ... The power to call for persons, papers and records is absolute, but it is seldom exercised without consideration of the public interest. The House of Commons recognizes that it should not require the production of documents in all cases; considerations of public policy, including national security, foreign relations...

and so forth.

My motion explicitly excluded national security and cabinet confidence, yet the redaction of documents provided to this committee by your department on the basis of solicitor-client privilege, as found in the Access to Information Act, disregards this absolute power of Parliament.

Our committee received a letter from the House of Commons's law clerk that stated, "The House's and its committees' power to order the production of records constitutes a constitutional parliamentary privilege that is not limited by the exemptions found in the Access to Information Act."

As a result, our committee met and decided that our chair would write to the deputy minister with a deadline of 4 p.m. yesterday for the documents to be sent to this committee unredacted, yet the deputy minister wrote back to reaffirm redactions on the basis of solicitor-client privilege. She said, "Redactions have been applied to two documents under section 23 of the Access to Information Act for the protection of solicitor-client privilege."

Madam Xavier, can you confirm that your department—Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada—is aware that you have breached parliamentary privilege?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Thank you for the question.

What I am aware of is that when we submitted the package originally, there were a few pages that needed to be translated or whose translation needed to be improved. I do believe that we have complied with that as of April 29, when we submitted the second package to the clerk.

The government is of the view that it cannot be compelled to disclose information such as solicitor-client privileged information.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: If you were just listening to what I read, though, that is not the case. You don't seem to be overly concerned about this.

It's clear that Parliament has the right to require all of these documents, and the law clerk is the one who actually does the redacting. Do you take what we're doing seriously here, or is this another case of the government's ignoring the will of Parliament and doing whatever it wants to?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, we take very seriously the work of this committee and are very much looking forward to the recommendations of this study to be able to help us to do our job even better.

• (1235)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Does the fact that the department is not willing to let the law clerk do the redactions and is doing its own redactions mean that there is potentially another Liberal government cover-up here that we should be concerned about?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I am not aware of any cover-ups that are being attempted. At this point in time, the interpretation and view of the government is that it cannot be compelled to disclose the information related to solicitor-client privilege.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Just to make sure that we understand how this works, the parliamentary law clerk is supposed to see the

unredacted documents first, and then he can determine if anything needs to be redacted. If your department does the redacting, then the law clerk is unable to determine the accuracy of these redactions. Do you not trust the parliamentary law clerk to do his job?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I have nothing to do with regard to not trusting the law clerk. This is not me trying to be difficult, nor is the department, for that matter, trying to be difficult.

What I would recommend is that we explore what could be the art of the possible with regard to the proposal that the law clerk potentially look at the redacted information in case this was an oversight from our perspective.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Specifically what the law clerk asked was to be able to see the unredacted documents so that he can determine that.

If you don't think the law clerk can do his job properly, would the department be willing to provide the unredacted documents to this committee in camera? That way we can review the documents without making them public. Do you trust parliamentarians to do this work?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I do trust that parliamentarians, Madame Chair, are doing the work that is necessary to do to ensure transparency to Canadians. With that said, I think I will take back what has been provided as advice here to see what would be the best course of action for the way forward.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: I find these answers a little bit disappointing. Hopefully when the report on privileges is completed, we can have a full discussion at committee.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Redekopp. We will now proceed to Ms. Kayabaga.

Ms. Kayabaga, you will have five minutes for your round of questioning.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Thank you, Madame Chair.

I would like to start by thanking the officials for extending their time and having to have unfair conversations that are being thrown at them this morning. There are some questions that are not fair to be asked of the officials this morning. I will start right there.

I would like to start my questions with Farah Boisclair, who is the director of the anti-racism task force.

Ms. Boisclair, can you tell me how long you've been doing this role? What was the original mandate when you started this role?

Ms. Farah Boisclair: The task force was established back in mid-2020. This was following the murder of George Floyd. There had been a lot of conversations happening within the department, and a willingness to tackle systemic racism. This was a global movement across the world and within Canada, and the public service was no different.

The task force was established with the scope of looking at systemic racism and guiding the department to look at systemic racism in managing our people, our employees and our public-facing programs and policies and how we deliver our services as well.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Thank you for that.

Basically you're able to respond to where we're at based on the work that you've been doing since 2020, but when we address some of the issues that have been brought up in IRCC around, let's say, refusal rates or other comments around.... Some of the witnesses mentioned racism in the Chinook program, in the processing or the refusal rates for African countries. I personally don't think that's something that you can answer. I personally think that it's unfair for you to have to answer that question.

I'm going to go to Madam Xavier.

There have been comments around the response as to why there are higher rates of refusal in African francophone countries. One of the responses that we received was that perhaps some students switched streams when they arrived here.

Has that number changed over the last 10 or 15 years? Has that number ever shifted, or is it still the same number of people who are switching streams?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I'm going to ask Madam Lang to give you additional information, as she may have a little bit more detail to be clearer in her response.

• (1240)

Ms. Tara Lang: In terms of switching streams, I do not have those statistics at my fingertips, but what I do know is that overall, approval rates have significantly increased over the past couple of years. I think they are up almost threefold between 2016 and 2019 in terms of approval rates for African students. I would really appreciate the opportunity to get the data correct for the chair.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: That's interesting, because the information that we have is higher rates of refusals for Africans, especially from francophone countries. I'm not sure if that data came from your department, because the data that we have shows that the refusal rates are up to 70% to 80%. There was a study during COVID to review it, and it showed that specific African countries, mainly francophone countries, had higher rates of refusals. Can you or someone else in your department comment on that?

Ms. Tara Lang: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the question, and I apologize. I don't think I understood the question correctly.

We are committed to a fair and non-discriminatory application of immigration laws. Volumes of temporary resident, visa and study permit applications from Africa have tripled from 2016 to 2019 across the top eight source countries from Africa. The number of refusals is generally increasing in relative proportion.

IRCC understands that the applicants, as well as the schools that accepted them, are disappointed when an application is refused, but there is no great difference between application approval rates for applicants from French-speaking African countries and other countries in the region, or approval rates of those destined for Quebec—

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: I apologize for cutting you off. Are you saying that...?

I think maybe you're answering the wrong question. My question is whether there are higher rates of refusals for African students—

Ms. Tara Lang: Yes, there are.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Perhaps you're trying to say that the language has no play in this.

One of the suggestions we heard from witnesses is that we open more offices across the continent to make sure that we reduce or tackle this higher rate of refusals. Can you comment on the tools that you intend to use?

I really hope that you have the same data we have, because if you don't, we're going to be having a different conversation. Witnesses have come forward and have provided us with some things that we can do to address that, and if we don't have the same numbers, we're going to have a harder time addressing that situation.

Can someone in your department who has this information comment?

Ms. Tara Lang: Yes, absolutely, we can get more clarity. However, Madam Chair, I think I misunderstood the question.

It is true that African students have a higher refusal rate than other top source countries of students coming to Canada. The most common reasons for refusals include applicants being unable to show officers that they are able to support themselves in Canada or that they would leave Canada if they no longer had legal status in the future.

In terms of the question—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. Your time is up.

We will now proceed to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe. You have two and a half minutes. Please begin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I did some small calculations while listening to my colleagues ask their questions. There are six IRCC offices in Europe that deal with visas. These six offices serve a population of about 746 million people. We are talking about a ratio of 124 million people per office. Now, in West Africa, so for Dakar, this ratio is 276 million people per office.

For IRCC, is a person from Africa less important than a person from Europe?

My question is for Ms. Xavier.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I thank the member for his question.

No, we do not open offices in particular locations because we find one continent more important than another. We are considering the possibility, especially because we want to increase francophone immigration, of opening an office in Cameroon, for example. So the answer is that we do not consider one continent less important than another.

As I said before, it is important to continue to analyze how and where we assess applications. We need to consider whether we need to open more offices, as has been recommended to us. That would be a possibility, but we would need to ensure that we have the resources to meet the needs that arise.

• (1245)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: What explains this difference in ratios, then?

Why do we lag so far behind on the African continent compared to the European continent?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I thank the member for his question.

I don't know if it can be said that we are behind the curve. When we open a mission or an office, we use several pieces of information as criteria, not just the availability of a population. We have to make sure that the country where we want to establish a mission or an office is safe, that we can get people there and that the volume is adequate. There are several elements that come into play in the analysis when it comes to setting up an overseas office. In addition, this is done in conjunction with Global Affairs Canada. So it's not entirely our decision.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: We are given excuses and pretexts every time.

I don't blame you, Ms. Xavier. You are defending your department.

Now, if you can't name a problem, it's very difficult to fix it. I have just demonstrated to you that there is a fairly major difference in the population ratio for an IRCC office between Europe and Africa, and I am still met with pretexts and excuses.

I strongly suggest that you analyze and assess the situation quite quickly and realize that there is a problem and it needs to be addressed.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe. Your time is up. Maybe you can come back to it in the next round.

We will now go to Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Kwan, you have two and a half minutes. Please begin.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Just to clarify from my last question, I would like the officials to provide information on the kind of training that middle management and executives are undertaking with respect to anti-racism training. How is the effectiveness of the training being evaluated? What recourse is there if the evaluation indicates that the training has not been effective? If officials could get that response to the committee, I would appreciate that.

Next, witnesses have indicated that there is differential treatment for resettlement organizations whose primary mandate or focus is on women. They indicated that often they are being asked to provide extra accountability measures, with extra requirements layered

on them, and that even, to some degree, their assessment officer feels compelled to do so because otherwise that assessment officer is mocked by colleagues in the department.

This is absolutely extremely concerning. I would like to ask the officials to table the practices that the department undertakes for accountability measures for resettlement organizations and if they're being applied to organizations in the same way. If not, how do they differ, and why are they different, then, in their application? I would appreciate it if I could get that information from the officials.

Earlier we were talking about processing delays. I'm interested in this information. With respect to processing delays, could the officials provide information to the committee to advise us on how often the processing delay is related to the lack of immigration levels numbers? In other words, it's not so much that the staff hasn't processed the application; rather, the processed application is sitting on a shelf in somebody's office somewhere, because they don't have the immigration levels numbers to accommodate it. I would love to get that information from the officials, if I might.

Finally, Madam Chair, oftentimes applications are delayed. There might be differential treatment or something else, but the steps where they are hung up are often tied to CBSA with respect to security screening. I would like to know how many applications are delayed as a result of the security screening not having been processed. If we could get that information broken down by country and region, that would be appreciated.

• (1250)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kwan. Your time is up.

We will now go to Mr. Redekopp for five minutes.

Mr. Redekopp, please begin.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: I believe Mr. Genuis was going next.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis is not here in the room.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Benzen can take it.

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead, Mr. Benzen.

Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Thank you, Chair. Thank you witnesses, and thank you, Brad.

One of the things we've heard from applicants is that some regions are underserved by visa application centres, especially in terms of getting their medical tests done. They have to travel to another country. They have to spend a lot of money and time. In some cases, before they get their application processed and before they get a meeting, their medical exam timeline has expired. They have to repeat this all over again, with additional costs.

It's my understanding that every country has doctors and clinics. Why is that we don't have a doctor or a clinic in every country certified or recognized to take these medical exams so that applicants are not having to spend all of this money and travel to other locations to get their medical exams done?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, thank you for the question.

Our intent is very much to ensure that when people are submitting their applications, and in particular medical exams, they have access to certified panel physicians. We do aim to try to ensure that there's availability of panel physicians throughout the world. There are 577 panel physicians certified throughout the world, but to that point in the question being posed, they may not be in every country.

Having said that, when we certify a panel physician, we have to ensure that they will be able to adhere to the standards that we're looking for, and that may be the reason certain countries may not have panel physicians. The availability of those physicians has to exist as well for us to be able to certify them, and they have to be willing to be part of the network and adhere to the evaluation standards and processes.

It's hard to give a more specific answer unless speaking to a specific country. I just want to generally say that the intent is to minimize delays with regard to examinations and to try as much as possible to make panel physicians available throughout the world so that this is not an additional delay for applicants.

Mr. Bob Benzen: If maybe it's because of COVID or other restrictions and the file cannot be processed in time, I'm just curious why the medical tests can't also be extended.

In my particular riding, I have a case of a family. It's not one person, so there are multiple costs. The first time it cost around \$5,000 to get the tests done, and now they have to do them a second time. They only have 60 days now to get them done, and they're not sure they can get the money to do them. Why can't their medical exams be extended in those cases?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Thank you for the question.

I won't be able to comment specifically on the case, but in general there have been times when we have been able to extend the medical exam expiration, and we've done that especially within the last two years because of border restrictions. We've applied public policies that permitted that extension to certain cohorts of applicants for that exact reason, in recognizing that it wasn't of their doing and that they needed more ability to have flexibility in the application process. It is something that is looked at and reflected on accordingly, depending on the case.

Mr. Bob Benzen: Thank you.

One of the things we heard in this process is the use of AI to triage simple files from complex files to handle the work more efficiently. There must be a decision tree process or chart that shows the steps that are involved to go in one direction or the other. Could you please tell us about the structure of the decision tree chart and the decision-making?

Also, could you provide to this committee that chart or some written documentation to show how that decision tree works? I think it's very important to be transparent so that we understand how the decisions are made to determine what becomes a simple file or a more complex one.

• (1255)

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Thank you for the question, Madam Chair.

Madam Lang does have some preliminary information to share related to the question asked.

Ms. Tara Lang: Yes. Thank you for the question, Madam Chair.

Absolutely, for each of our advanced analytic lines of business there is a decision tree chart, as it were, and a governance structure. It would be different depending on the line of business and the type of advanced analytics. We can take that back for sure and see what can be provided to the committee.

Mr. Bob Benzen: Okay.

For each of the different lines—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Benzen; your time is up. We will now proceed to Ms. Lalonde for five minutes.

Ms. Lalonde, you will have five minutes. Please begin.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

First of all, I'd like to thank each and every one of you for being with us today.

I've been thinking a bit about the question my colleague asked earlier.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada data on the refusal rate for study permits indicate that people applying from African countries, particularly francophone Africa, have a much higher refusal rate than those applying from other parts of the world.

So I have three questions about this.

According to the department, what are the causes in this agreement that explain these refusal rates?

How is the department addressing this issue?

What steps, if any, is the department taking to reduce these refusal rates?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I thank the member for her question.

As my colleague, Ms. Lang, said, there are certainly significant refusal rates and there are various reasons for those refusals.

I will ask Ms. Lang to give you further details.

[*English*]

Ms. Tara Lang: Depending on the part of the country you are in, you are subject to the same regulations and the same laws when you are applying to come to Canada as a student. You are correct that right now we are seeing higher refusal rates from African countries for those destined to study in Canada.

In terms of what we are doing to examine this and where we can go from here, we are delivering unconscious bias training to all officers across Canada and the world. Regardless of whether they're situated in Africa or Ottawa, they will all receive that training.

We're also trying to support the review of all policies and programs to identify systemic racism barriers and disparate impacts on racialized groups.

I think my colleague Farah Boisclair spoke earlier about disaggregated data. As we learn more from disaggregated data, we can dig into issues we should be focusing on specific to certain continents, certain decisions, with Africa in mind, and not only Africa, but all countries that Canada welcomes.

We're also implementing mitigation plans to reduce racial disparities across programs and procedures based on systemic review, data mapping and external sources to identify and address bias in decision-making and risk management, including our automation practices.

As mentioned earlier, we conduct quality assurance exercises on a regular basis across all of our lines of business. We are committed to looking at the higher rates of refusal for African countries, and if there is anything we can do differently to determine if there is a reason behind that, beyond it simply being a just and law-based refusal.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, let me provide a clarification.

I would add that this is the reason why we have introduced the direct stream for studies. It's another tool to ensure that if we are unable to do the necessary analysis and settlement in a country, there will also be a stream that will allow us to process study permit applications from certain countries more efficiently.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much for that response.

I might like to reopen the discussion, because I have a question about what you just said.

On that point, Ms. Xavier, are there any opportunities to see how we can develop best practices with other countries?

I understand the issue of financing and the banking system in these countries very well. However, are there any solutions that the committee could recommend to help us achieve goals that I think we all care about? We want a stronger immigration system and, in particular, we want to try to demystify this refusal rate prevalent in French-speaking African countries.

● (1300)

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I'd like to thank the honourable member for her question.

We have observed that the applications are not filled out properly in some countries. That is not limited to African countries. They may actually be having trouble figuring out how to fill out the application.

We know that some countries have consultants to help people fill out the forms, but the level of service they provide isn't always up to par. In addition, the integrity of those consultants is sometimes questionable.

We have seen better results when consultants are on site to provide that assistance because the forms are filled out fully and properly.

That is something we are trying to improve by providing education through the missions and by talking to clients, consultants and all those who have a hand in supporting the process of immigrating to Canada.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, but time is up.

This ends our second round.

We will now start our third round. Mr. Genuis, you have five minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I need to go quite quickly to get all this in within the time provided. Again what I'm looking for from officials isn't a specific answer in terms of the information, but just a confirmation that this information can be provided to the committee within the 30-day timeline.

Regarding course content and materials used for any anti-racism training or information sessions conducted for IRCC employees, are we able to provide that?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Yes, Madam Chair, I believe that was an undertaking by another member. We are able to provide that information.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Can you provide the current and historical processing times for each visa office and category from 2015 until now?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Yes, we are able to provide that data. It may take us a bit of time because you're asking from 2015; however, we will endeavour to provide that information.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Can you provide the raw and complete responses that IRCC employees provided to Pollara Strategic Insights for the anti-racism study? Obviously, that will be with personal identifiers not included.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: The Pollara report was done by an independent firm that we contracted, and it was done on an anonymous basis. The information that is provided on the Library and Archives website, as well as that on our intranet, is exactly the information that we have. We don't have any additional information to provide to you with more background on that, because it was intentionally done in an anonymous manner so that there would be no fear or concerns by the employees—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That sounds reasonable. I'll follow up if the stakeholders have any further suggestions around that.

Can you provide all contracts that IRCC holds with Deloitte & Touche LLP, Accenture and McKinsey regarding artificial intelligence, digital platform modernization, Chinook and the digital services response project?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I will have to assess whether that's feasible.

With regard to the digital platform modernization, this project is under way and is right now in the contracting process. There is no contracting that has occurred with regard to digital platform modernization, in particular phase 3, for which the funding was recently provided in budget 2021. As a result, the work is under way and vendors have been engaged, but there's a very clearly outlined RFP that will be put out to be able to do the necessary steps on that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you. Please provide what is available along those lines, as well as information as contracts are signed.

Can you provide the privacy analysis conducted with respect to Chinook and contracts between IRCC and ApplyBoard and between IRCC and ApplyProof since 2015?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, if that information exists with regard to ApplyBoard and the other one, we will provide that information, as well as the privacy analysis that was requested.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Can you provide the project launch terms of reference and road map documents for the service transformation strategy and road map, the IM/IT strategy and road map project and the TDSS innovation strategy?

• (1305)

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, if that information exists, we will provide it to the committee.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Can you provide all editions of the IRCC policy playbook on automated support for decision-making, as well as any additional programming information and instructions used for advanced analytical systems?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: With regard to the playbook, it continues to be an evergreen document, for the reason that we continue to update it as we learn more of what we need to be doing with regard to that. However, we can absolutely provide it. I believe it's also an undertaking to the committee.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am aware that some of these items may overlap with things that other members have asked for, and I want to recognize the good work done by all members on this issue. We are being asked by stakeholders for this kind of information because it's in the interest of transparency and it helps them to understand how to hold the government accountable and how to advise Canadians about the way these decisions are made.

In the remaining time, in response to another member it was said that quality assurance is done on the staffing side, because the systems like Chinook inform decisions made by staff as the staff making the decision. At the end of the day, if those systems are informing those decisions, those systems require some quality assurance mechanisms as well.

Have I understood the dynamics right? What is your response to that?

Ms. Tara Lang: I can respond, Madam Chair.

Chinook is a processing tool, and advanced analytics are different entities. Chinook is simply a triage tool that we use to pull information from GCMS. An officer says, "I would like to pull information X Y, and Z" and then puts it in an easy to read table from which they will make their decision. That table is wiped clean and they start again with a new process.

In that instance, the QA is done on the decision, not the system—

The Chair: I am sorry for interrupting, Ms. Lang. Maybe we will come back in the next round.

We will now proceed to Mr. Ali.

Mr. Ali, you will have five minutes. You can begin, please.

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to all officials for being here.

Madam Chair, I will be sharing my time with Ms. Kayabaga.

My question is to Ms. Boisclair.

The committee recently heard from a witness that the citizenship and immigration department is diverse but that the outcome of the decision on applicants' cases might be more equitable if the officer who made the decision shared the culture of the applicants whose cases they were deciding.

Do you know whether the group of immigration officers who make decisions on cases are at least as diverse as the department as a whole?

Ms. Farah Boisclair: I will say that we are looking at the demographics of our workforce on a quarterly basis. We have recently been looking at it from a disaggregated data perspective. We look at our workforce in tiers now, looking at the representation at the entry level, the middle manager level and the executive level. Against those, we've set ambitious targets that are higher than the norm within government in order to hold ourselves to a higher standard. That is something we strive to get to.

I'll pass it to Deputy Xavier if she wants to add anything to that.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: To add to what Madame Boisclair has shared, as part of the training and requirements for our decision-making officers, we provide them with cultural training with regard to being culturally sensitive, even though they may not come from that culture.

To Madame Boisclair's point, the intent is to continue to diversify our workforce throughout the world and throughout the domestic world as well in order to continue to ensure that we have an inclusive view and diverse views when people are reviewing a decision.

In particular for our international network, there is also the addition of our locally engaged staff, who are very helpful in providing advice with regard to the local culture and what could possibly be influencing some of the applications. That is taken very much into consideration as part of the work we do.

The locally engaged staff have responded to surveys and have provided information to help us continue to strengthen our cultural awareness with regard to the applications that are being submitted across the globe.

• (1310)

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Thank you so much.

I'm sharing my time with Ms. Kayabaga. You can ask questions, please.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Thank you to my colleague for allowing me, Madam Chair, to ask a question again.

I want to go back to the question that I didn't get a chance to finish and get an answer on. Could we go to Madam Xavier to answer this question?

The first part of the comment was that we're looking to see if these students are going to go back to their country. Can we go back to that, given that we're looking at labour shortages and our country's response to that? Why is it that when it comes to African students, we want to enforce those rules more than for other parts of the world?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Just to start off, every application that is submitted for an international student—or any application, for that matter, but in particular because we're talking about international students—each application is looked at on its own merit and its own application in the unique way in which it's submitted.

We are not looking at it from the perspective that because it's from Africa, it should be responded to in some manner. It's all based on the data that we have and—

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: My apologies for cutting you off, Ms. Xavier.

I emphasize that question because this is a response we had received from your team, so I go back to the specific mention of fraud, financial reasons or potentially not going back to Africa.

Can you respond to why these are measures that IRCC is taking when it comes to African students versus other students from across the world?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: What I am trying to say is that those measures, whether it's for fraud, reasons of finance or reasons of not returning, are looked at in all applications and not just in the applications of students originating from Africa.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Thank you.

If there are higher rates of refusals in African countries, can you comment as to why? Witnesses have said they think racism is involved. Do you think the same?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Thank you for the question.

What we think is that it's possible that racism could be at play. Part of what we're doing is that analysis to do that quality assurance, as we've been discussing, to ensure whether or not the application has been looked at through the lens of the facts provided and against the rules that might be applied.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: For the sake of time, Ms. Xavier—

The Chair: Sorry for interrupting, but the time is up for Ms. Kayabaga. We will now proceed to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for two and half minutes.

Just as a reminder, if members are moving about in the room, they should please wear masks. These are the health measures we have to make sure that we follow.

We will now proceed to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let's move into problem-solving mode. After all, it's not all about expressing opposition or support; it's also about coming up with solutions.

Ms. Boisclair, I have a question for you.

A few weeks ago, we heard from a witness who recommended that interviews with visa officers be recorded so that the officer could focus on the interview, not on taking notes or writing their report. That way, a record of the interview would be available if the decision were ever appealed.

What do you think of that recommendation?

Ms. Farah Boisclair: Madam Chair, I'd like to thank the honourable member for his question.

We are very interested in the committee's recommendations.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Ms. Xavier, perhaps you can answer the question.

I'm not talking about the committee. You are appearing as witnesses before the committee, and you have the right to provide your personal opinion on proposed solutions, if you wish. That will help us produce our recommendations. I'm not sure whether one of the witnesses has an opinion on the possibility of recording interviews. Is that something that might be helpful?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I'd like to thank the honourable member for his question and suggestion.

We are not here to provide our opinions, but we will certainly take into account any recommendation put forward by the committee and examine whether it can be put into practice. We will determine whether it is consistent with the department's mandate.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I have another question for you. I'll go about it a different way.

Do you think the department would be able to implement a mechanism for recording interviews?

• (1315)

Ms. Caroline Xavier: My recommendation would be to conduct an assessment to figure out whether it's doable. I wouldn't want to say outright that it is, because I don't have enough information to confirm whether that's true. For example, we would have to determine whether the data could be stored securely, so that it didn't end up in the wrong hands.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I completely agree.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: We would have to do some analysis to get a better sense of how it could be done.

We are open to considering the committee's recommendations and exploring what would be possible.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: My time is already up.

Thank you, Ms. Xavier.

[English]

The Chair: We'll now proceed to Ms. Kwan for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Kwan, please begin.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

The officials said they are now analyzing policies and programs within IRCC in relation to systemic racism. Could the officials provide the committee with an outline on how this work is being done? For example, would things like the economic conditions of a country be part of the considerations related to this work? I would like to get an understanding of how this work is being done and what the timeline is.

Also, could the officials advise us as whether, when the report is completed, it will be made public?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Thank you, Madame Chair, for the request.

I just want to make sure I understand the question. As was mentioned, we are doing a lot of work to analyze and review our policies and programs and our client service delivery to ensure that we're removing barriers related to systemic racism. That is ongoing work in progress, and whatever work that is under way related to that we will be able to provide to the committee. I believe there's a request for it to be provided when it is completed, but this will be ongoing work. It's not just one moment in time, but part of what we're committing to.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

Maybe I can ask, then, for the officials to table with the committee all of the various different kinds of work you're doing to address the issue around racism and system racism within IRCC.

If I could actually get information from the officials, I would like to know to what extent applications are being refused because of the economic conditions of a country. If we could get that broken down by streams, I would appreciate it. I don't know if they collect the data, but if they do, I would like to get that data.

I would also like to get information on the backlog. The response from the officials, as I understand it, is that paper applications are still stuck in the system, and those are not being counted in the backlogs. I wonder if the officials can advise the committee on how many offices are still dealing with a paper backlog in the mailroom. Could we get that information listed by country and offices? If they have the information on how many applications are still stuck in that circumstance, I would appreciate it.

Madam Chair, after this I do have one other point of order issue that I would like to raise before the committee adjourns.

The Chair: Your time is up right now. We have two more people for this third round of questioning. We will have five minutes with Mr. Redekopp and five minutes with Mr. Dhaliwal to end this panel.

Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp, for five minutes.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Xavier, I want to read our exchange from March 24. I said as follows:

The high commissioner appeared at this committee, asking for the country of Bangladesh to be admitted into the student direct stream. I specifically asked the minister on March 3 if he could make every effort to have Bangladesh enter into the direct stream program for foreign students, and his answer was that he was certainly open to it.

For the associate deputy minister, it's been 20 days or so. First of all, has the minister talked to you about getting Bangladesh into the student direct stream?

Then I said:

Can you confirm that Bangladesh is in the process of being considered for SDS right now?

Your response was:

I cannot personally confirm it, but I can double-check.

To recap, I wrote the minister in December on this issue. He hasn't responded. I asked the minister at this committee and I didn't get a response. Then I asked you on March 24, and you said that you would double-check. I've been waiting 152 days, and of course Bangladeshi students have been waiting much longer than that.

I'm going to try once again: Can you confirm for this committee that Bangladesh is in the process of being considered for SDS right now? Failing that, can you confirm if the minister is going reply to my original letter of December 2, or not?

• (1320)

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, thank you for the question and the intervention provided.

I'm happy to report that Bangladesh is indeed being considered for the SDS program. On March 24, 2022, IRCC informed the High Commissioner of Bangladesh in a letter that the internal evaluation of SDS was completed in the fall of 2021 and that the department is reviewing the results of that evaluation. The SDS program, as you all know, is a program that helps expedite processing. IRCC remains open to continue to finishing that evaluation and to be able, hopefully, to see Bangladesh become one of our SDS streams.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Thank you.

If you could please provide us a written response about when that is likely to be completed, that would be very helpful.

Madam Chair, I would like to give the rest of my time to Mr. Deltell.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Good afternoon.

My question is for Ms. Xavier.

Ms. Xavier, earlier you were answering Ms. Lalonde's question about the immigration process vis-à-vis certain countries. You said that the integrity of some consultants was questionable.

Can you tell us more about that? Can we be confident that consultants act with integrity?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madam Chair, I'd like to thank the honourable member for his question.

Naturally, we hope that consultants working in the immigration sector are well intentioned. In fact, many of them are very dedicated and hard-working, and have the skills to do the job.

That said, we are also aware of what are called ghost consultants operating around the world and in Canada. Our concerns have to do with those consultants. That's the reason why the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants was created through legislation—to help regulate consultants.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: That means consultants acting on behalf of the Canadian government or in accordance with the rules established by Canada have already been licensed by the government. Is that right?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: That is my understanding, yes.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: That is your understanding?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: As I understand it, that is the process.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: My question is not about understanding; it's about the facts. Are consultants licensed by the Canadian government to practise their occupation, yes or no?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I'm not familiar with the exact process as to how consultants are licensed. I would prefer to follow up with you afterwards so that I can confirm the facts and provide exact information. That's why I'm hesitating.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you. I appreciate your honesty.

I think it's worth looking into because, if you put your trust in someone, it has to work both ways. You said you had a college for consultants, so it's important to make sure that it does in fact exist,

to weed out miscreants and crooks who are taking advantage of Canada's generosity.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I can assure you, Madam Chair, that the college does exist.

The fact is I'm less familiar with how the college works, because it hasn't been around very long. Nevertheless, I imagine that one of the purposes of the college is precisely to license consultants. I want to be sure I provide you with the right information, so I will get back to you on this.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I appreciate your integrity, madam.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. We will now proceed to Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Dhaliwal, you will have five minutes for your round of questioning. You can please begin.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, in the past this committee has heard about difficulties with family class applications. The immigration and refugee act requires spouses going through a sponsorship process to prove, number one, that their marriage is genuine, and number two, that when they entered into the marriage, their intentions were to be husband and wife and not to be in a marriage of convenience.

I see many decisions in which it is very difficult to grasp the reasons that their failure are based on. I would like to ask a question, through you, to the department. What are some of the factors used to assess the legitimacy of a spousal relationship, and how often do you see that the spousal sponsorship applications are refused due to a concern with the genuineness of the relationship?

● (1325)

Ms. Caroline Xavier: We see so much value in family reunification because we recognize how important it is to bring families together, and it is an important part of the programs we deliver.

When we're assessing the relationship between spouses or common-law partners, officers must be satisfied that the relationship that exists is genuine. The application kit requires that applicants submit certain documents as proof of their relationship. In the case of applicants in the spousal or common-law partnership in Canada class, officers must be satisfied that the applicant is living with the sponsor in Canada. If the documents submitted do not provide adequate proof of a genuine conjugal relationship—and that could include things like pictures demonstrating that the relationship has been ongoing for some time or that it is legitimate—and if the officers have doubt that the applicant is living with the sponsor, the officer may request additional information or schedule an interview to get clarification on the application.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Chair, I am not satisfied with this answer. Particularly I look at India and Pakistan. Many marriages these days are still arranged marriages, and it's not necessarily the case that they fell in love before they were married. Most of those applications fail because of the age difference. In the relationship, it is just a number, and why is it applications like those? Then there is the economic status. The economic status can be anything once you fall in love.

Those are the issues, and I want to see how the department will work in the future to mitigate these as reasons that these spousal applications are being failed and the applicants are being harassed for so long.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Madame Chair, I believe Madam Lang will be able to provide some additional information because, as stated, it is important that we ensure that the relationship is genuine but that we're not doing so in a manner that is seen as harassing an applicant.

Ms. Tara Lang: In general, family class applications have a very high approval rate, so I am sorry to hear that you have a number of instances of what you believe are disingenuous refusals.

We do request a lot of documents, and if we are not satisfied, if the officers making the decision in the department are not satisfied, applicants can be convoked to an interview to try to establish genuineness of relationship.

However, rest assured that as part of our anti-racism efforts, if there are things we are not seeing from a cultural bias perspective, we hope to uncover those in our evaluation of programs and policies, and we absolutely would like to do better if there is a way to do so.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Chair, on the TRV applications, it's been almost a year, a year and a half or two years that people have been waiting and decisions have not been made, particularly from the Delhi office.

I would like to know what the department is doing to improve the situation, particularly in that office.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I will say that during the pandemic, we did make decisions to address the priority applications of people who could travel to Canada, but at one particular point, as you know, border restrictions did not permit us to be able to allow all applicants to head toward Canada.

Having said that, Madam Lang has some additional information with regard to your question.

Ms. Tara Lang: As part of the fall economic statement, the department was given several million dollars in order to work on processing times and backlogs, and a significant portion of this money is being dedicated to reducing the TRV backlog, particularly as it pertains to files coming out of India, which, as we know, is our

number one source country at this time for temporary resident visas.

We do have hundreds of thousands of applications, and we are dedicated to processing—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Lang. Time is up for Mr. Dhaliwal.

This ends our panel.

Go ahead, Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll be very quick.

Mr. Redekopp raised the issue around the law clerk's report being brought back to us. I would like to ask for some information to be included in that report, namely for the law clerk to do a legal analysis on the issue around client-solicitor privilege so that the committee will have that information pertaining to the undertaking to be released, because it deals with that issue.

The other thing I would also like to receive incorporated in that report is how the question of client-solicitor privilege has been dealt with by the committee previously. I don't recall it becoming an issue at the committee during the time I have been here, so I would like to know the historical background of how often this matter has become an issue for the committee and how it was dealt with. Getting some information with respect to that would be useful and helpful for our committee's work.

• (1330)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kwan.

We have a hard stop. We have to adjourn the meeting. We don't have services available after this point.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Just quickly, I agree and I want to clarify that we're looking specifically for the law clerk to provide advice as to whether solicitor-client privilege is a legitimate reason for excluding documents or whether the right of parliamentarians to access documents, in the view of the law clerk, is not subject to that limitation. In particular we're looking for that clarification from the law clerk, as well as some of the historical background and context that Ms. Kwan has suggested. I am supportive of the recommendation.

The Chair: We will have to adjourn this meeting because we don't have services available. I will discuss it with the clerk and get back to the members on this issue in our next meeting.

Before we adjourn the meeting, this is a reminder for all the members that we have an extra meeting tomorrow from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m., so I hope everyone will be able to join in.

The meeting is adjourned.

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