Date: 20070503

Docket: IMM-5582-06

Citation: 2007 FC 486

Ottawa, Ontario, May 3, 2007

PRESENT: The Honourable Mr. Justice Blais

BETWEEN:

SELMI RAMZI

Applicant

and

THE MINISTER OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Respondent

REASONS FOR JUDGMENT AND JUDGMENT

[1] This is an application for judicial review filed under section 72 of the *Immigration and*

Refugee Protection Act, S.C. 2001, c. 27, from a decision issued on August 14, 2006 by the visa

officer at the Canadian Embassy in Tunisia, refusing to grant the applicant a student visa.

RELEVANT FACTS

[2] The applicant is a citizen of Tunisia who applied for a student visa at the Canadian Embassy in Tunisia, to pursue CÉGEP studies in Limoilou for the fall 2006 semester, in the "Contact CÉGEP" program. [3] After receiving his confirmation of admission to CÉGEP Limoilou and his Certificat

d'acceptation du Québec (CAQ), the applicant sent an application for a student visa to the Canadian

Embassy in Tunisia to obtain a visa to study in Canada.

[4] In a letter dated August 14, 2006, the applicant was informed that his application for a

student visa had been refused. The grounds for that refusal are set out in the following excerpt from

the letter sent by the visa officer:

[Translation]

A careful review of the information that you provided with your application, and the supporting documents provided, leads me to conclude that you do not meet the conditions for a study permit. The reasons are as follows:

- I am not satisfied that you have the financial means to pay your tuition and housing during your stay in Canada and to return to your country of residence.
- I am not satisfied that you will leave Canada at the end of your authorized stay for the following reasons: you do not have the necessary ties to ensure your return.

ISSUES

- [5] The following issues are raised by the parties as part of the judicial review:
 - 1) Did the visa officer err in her interpretation of the Act and Regulations, under the terms

of the Canada-Quebec Accord?

- 2) Did the visa officer commit an error in her assessment of the evidence justifying the intervention of this Court?
- 3) Did the visa officer fail in her duty of procedural fairness toward the applicant?

STANDARD OF REVIEW

[6] The issuance of a visitor's via by a visa officer is a discretionary decision (*De La Cruz v. Canada (Minister of Employment and Immigration)* (1989), 26 F.T.R. 285). As such, the courts must show considerable deference in judicial reviews of such decisions (*Maple Lodge Farms Ltd. v. Canada,* [1982] 2 S.C.R. 2). The standard of review applicable to the factual conclusions of a visa officer is therefore patent unreasonableness (*Zheng v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration*), [2001] F.C.J. No. 10 (QL)).

[7] Recently, in *Boni v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration)*, 2006 FCA 68, [2006] F.C.J. No. 275 (QL), the Federal Court of Canada cited Justice Yves de Montigny in *Sadiki Ouafae v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration)*, 2005 FC 459, [2005] F.C.J. No. 592 (QL), who attempted to reconcile the various conclusions of the Federal Court regarding the standard of review applicable to decisions by visa officers. At paragraph 19, de Montigny J. concluded as follows:

> [...] The reason for the different choices is essentially that the nature of the decision under review by this Court depends on the context. Thus it goes without saying that the appropriate standard of review for a discretionary decision by a visa officer assessing a prospective immigrant's occupational experience is patent unreasonableness. Where the visa officer's decision is based on an assessment of the facts, this Court will not intervene unless it can be shown that the decision is based on an erroneous finding of fact made in a perverse or capricious manner.

[8] As held by Justice Michel Beaudry in *Mered v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration)*, 2006 FC 454, [2006] F.C.J. No. 564 (QL), at paragraph 12, the conclusions of visa officers "as to the seriousness of the applicant's study plans and his intention to leave Canada after his studies are questions of fact". The same is true for the assessment of financial resources. The

visa officer's decision regarding the sufficiency of evidence will therefore be subject to the standard of patent unreasonableness.

[9] However, if the Court finds that there was a breach of procedural fairness, the application for judicial review will be allowed, as it is clearly established that the standard of review applicable to issues of natural justice and procedural fairness is correctness (*Canadian Union of Public Employees (C.U.P.E.) v. Ontario (Minister of Labour)*, [2003] 1 S.C.R. 539).

ANALYSIS

1) Did the visa officer err in her interpretation of the Act and Regulations, under the terms of the Canada-Quebec Accord?

[10] First, the applicant claims that the visa officer erred in law by failing to consider the Canada-Quebec Accord. As part of the CAQ application, the Ministère de l'Immigration et des communautés culturelles (MICC) had to assess the applicant's financial capacity based on the Declaration of guardianship from Nadia El-Ghandouri, the letter from her employer, and her bank statement, the same information submitted to the visa officer. The applicant argues that the MICC, which issued the CAQ, thus determined that he had the financial resources needed to come study in Quebec. The applicant therefore maintains that allowing the visa officer to reassess the same information and reach an opposite conclusion makes Quebec's assessment of financial considerations and its declaration of satisfaction, confirmed by the CAQ, completely useless and without any basis.

[11] Although I sympathize with the applicant's argument, in that it seems illogical for the visa officer to be able to conduct an independent analysis of the same evidence and reach different

Page: 5

conclusions, thus invalidating the determination by the MICC regarding the applicant's financial capacity, the visa officer's approach nonetheless respects the principles of the Canada-Quebec Accord and the provisions of the Act and Regulations.

[12] Indeed, as submitted by the respondent, Canada has exclusive jurisdiction to determine the admissibility of foreign students to the country. Quebec's power to impose additional criteria does not interfere with Canada's jurisdiction in this area, just as the provincial requirements are not at all binding on Canada, which is the sole authority for admitting foreign students by issuing a visitor's visa. The respondent is therefore correct in stating that the fact that a CAQ was issued by Quebec did not relieve the applicant of his burden of satisfying federal authorities that he met the admission criteria set out in the Act and Regulations. The respondent also notes that the visa officer not only had the authority, but also the duty, to examine the applicant's financial resources to determine if he was admissible, independent of the assessment of the same issue by provincial authorities, as sufficient financial resources are a condition for admissibility to be issued a study permit under section 220 of the Regulations. Moreover, insufficient financial resources are grounds for the inadmissibility of any applicant, under section 39 of the Act. The Federal Court of appeal examined the issue of the Canada-Quebec Accord's impact on the jurisdiction of a visa officer in *Biao v*. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration), 2001 FCA 43, [2001] F.C.J. No. 338 (QL), concluding as follows at paragraph 1:

> We consider that this appeal should be dismissed with costs and that this question certified by the motions judge should be answered in the negative:

Does the Canada-Quebec Accord limit the jurisdiction of the visa officer to question the source of funds of a Quebec-destined applicant for permanent residence in Canada, in order to establish

the applicant's admissibility?

It seems clear to the Court that there is no incompatibility in the powers and duties of the two signatories of the Canada-Quebec Accord regarding immigration to Quebec. Clause 12 of that Accord states that the federal government has the authority to admit immigrants to Quebec and that it is the Government of Quebec which has the responsibility and powers of selecting immigrants wishing to settle in Quebec. Naturally the selection by the Quebec authorities is made and conducted from among the eligible immigrants. [...]

[13] I therefore consider that the Federal Court of Appeal disposed of the issue and I have no hesitation in concluding that the visa officer did not err in law by conducting an independent analysis of the sufficiency of the applicant's financial resources.

2) Did the visa officer commit an error in her assessment of the evidence justifying the intervention of this Court?

[14] All foreign students must obtain a visa before entering Canada, under subsection 11(1) of the Act. More detailed information regarding the admission of foreign nationals wishing to study in Canada is found in the Regulations, particularly sections 213, 216 and 220. As mentioned by the respondent, all of those legislative provisions explicitly state that the visa officer must be satisfied that the applicant wants to settle in Canada temporarily, and must ensure that the applicant meets all admissibility conditions, including financial conditions. Moreover, the applicant bears the burden of demonstrating to the visa officer that he or she meets each of the criteria set out in the Regulations.

[15] The applicant argues that the visa officer's conclusion that he did not have the necessary financial resources is patently unreasonable in light of the documents submitted, which clearly show that his financial resources were sufficient to cover any costs, particularly the evidence that his

Page: 7

tuition had been paid as required by the CÉGEP and the Declaration of guardianship by Ms. El-Ghandouri. The applicant also argued that the visa officer's conclusion that he would not leave Canada at the end of his stay is entirely arbitrary and goes against the evidence submitted, specifically the applicant's declaration that he would return to Tunisia following his studies.

[16] Regarding the issue of the assessment of evidence, the respondent maintains that it is clear from the visa officer's affidavit that she considered all the documents submitted by the applicant, but that she determined that they did not demonstrate sufficient financial resources for studies in Canada. In light of the evidence before her, the respondent asserts that it was not patently unreasonable for the visa officer to conclude that the applicant had not shown that his financial resources were sufficient to cover all costs associated with his period of studies in Canada. Among other things, the visa officer noted in her affidavit that the applicant had indicated in his application for a study permit that his expenses in Canada would be covered by [translation] "myself or my parents" and by "others". Despite that, the applicant did not submit any documents regarding his financial capacity or that of his parents.

[17] Moreover, the Declaration of guardianship signed by Ms. El-Ghandouri, on its own, was not enough to show that the applicant had sufficient financial resources to come study in Canada; again, she would have had to show that she had sufficient financial resources to cover all costs associated with the applicant's period of studies that she committed to covering. However, the respondent maintains that an analysis of all documents submitted as evidence by the applicant regarding Ms. El-Ghandouri's financial resources reasonably led the visa officer to conclude that her financial resources were not sufficient to cover all costs associated with the applicant's period of studies in Canada. As stated by the visa officer in her affidavit:

[Translation]

As the total amount appearing in the Royal Bank of Canada bank statement barely covers the cheques to CÉGEP Limoilou dated July 7, 2006 and August 11, 2006 for Mr. Selmi's tuition, I determined, while considering that Ms. Nadia El-Ghandouri earned an annual salary of \$70,650 for 2006, that her financial resources were not sufficient to cover all costs associated with Mr. Selmi's stay in Canada, in this case, in addition to tuition, all costs of living during his studies and return airfare to come to Canada and to leave again.

[18] The same is true for the visa officer's determination that she was not convinced that the applicant would leave Canada after completing his studies. Although the letter included with the application for a study permit indicated that the applicant planned to return to Tunisia after completing his studies, the visa officer had to examine the applicant's ties to his country of origin to determine whether he would leave Canada following his authorized stay. In this case, the visa officer's assessment of the evidence did not satisfy her that the applicant had sufficient ties to his country of origin to show that he would leave Canada following his authorized stay. The visa officer gave the following explanation in her affidavit:

[Translation]

I found that nothing held Mr. Selmi in Tunisia. He is 29 years old and is single. He has not completed his high school (or the equivalent) in Tunisia. He indicated in his study permit application that he is a self-employed decorator. However, he provided no evidence in that regard.

[...] I noted that the program in which Mr. Selmi registered at CÉGEP Limoilou is only an upgrade program to gain access to college studies. The nature of his planned program of study did not satisfy me that Mr. Selmi would return to Tunisia after completing his program at CÉGEP Limoilou, as those studies are not in any way specifically related to his current work.

Mr. Selmi also submitted no study plan to show his specific plans for the future.

[19] Finally, the respondent notes that the fact that the applicant disagreed with the visa officer's conclusions is not enough to demonstrate that they are patently unreasonably. On this point, I agree with the respondent. Having carefully examined before the visa officer, I cannot conclude that her decision was based on an erroneous finding of fact, made in a perverse or capricious manner or without considering the elements available to her.

3) Did the visa officer fail in her duty of procedural fairness toward the applicant?

[20] Regarding procedural fairness, the applicant argues that, if the visa officer was not satisfied with the documents submitted regarding his financial capacity, she should have called him to an interview or required additional documents, which she did not do. The same is true regarding her doubts as to the accuracy of the applicant's statement that he intended to return to Tunisia. By failing to call the applicant to interview, the visa officer should have assumed that it was true that the applicant would leave Canada at the end of his stay and that the objective of his studies in Quebec was to help him acquire knowledge that would benefit him in his own country, as he had indicated in his file, notwithstanding the issue of his ties to his country of origin.

[21] The respondent, in turn, states that the visa officer asserted in her affidavit that she had not called the applicant to an interview because she had the elements needed to reach her decision. it was up to the applicant to submit all necessary documents with his application for a study permit to show that he had sufficient financial resources to come study and Canada and that he had sufficient

ties to his country of origin to convince the visa officer that he would leave Canada at the end of his

stay. That burden of proof could was not shifted to the visa officer. The respondent argues that it is well-established in jurisprudence that an applicant has no right to an interview based on insufficient supporting evidence, and that the visa officer had no duty to call the applicant to an interview to allow him to bolster the evidence. There was therefore no breach of procedural fairness.

[22] First, it is important to note that nothing in the Act or the Regulations provides for an interview or a request by the visa officer for additional documents.

[23] At the hearing before this Court, counsel for the applicant mentioned that the file before the visa officer was complete. In her affidavit filed in support of the respondent's claims, the visa officer stated at paragraph 17: [translation] "I did not call Mr. Selmi to an interview because I had the elements needed to reach my decision."

[24] I agree with the position expressed by the respondent that an officer who finds that a via applicant does not meet the requirements set out in the Act and the Regulations is not required to call the applicant to an interview or to ask that he bolster the application. If that were the case, visa officers would need to contact applicants and request additional documents until the applicant was able to meet the requirements set out in the act. It would, in my view, shift the burden of proof, which was clearly not the desire of the legislator.

[25] In that regard, in Dardic v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration),

2001 FCT 150, [2001] F.C.J. No. 326 (QL), Justice Elizabeth Heneghan stated the following at

paragraph 18:

¶ 18 As for the Applicant's arguments that the Visa Officer breached a duty of fairness towards him by failing to interview him and provide an opportunity to satisfy her concerns, I refer to the decision of Justice Tremblay-Lamer in *Tahir v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration*, (1998), 159 F.T.R. 109, at page 110 where the Court said:

The applicant submits that when an application is deficient, the visa officer has a duty to request supporting documentation or to grant an interview in order to substantiate the application. I do not agree. The onus is on the Applicant to file an application together with any relevant supporting documentation. There is no duty for the visa officer to try to bolster an incomplete application. Obviously, the visa officer may make inquiries, when warranted, but, where the applicant simply provides a job title and does not even care enough to provide any of the available supporting material, I find it offensive to suggest that the burden is shifted and that the visa officer should have done more than she did.

[26] In Beganovic v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration), 2004 FC 359, [2004]

F.C.J. No. 406 (QL), Justice Michael A. Kelen also shared that opinion in concluding as follows:

¶15 The applicant submits that there was a breach of fairness in not being granted an interview or the opportunity to respond, and that the visa officer was obligated to consider eligibility first despite not having proper documentation. These arguments are without merit. This Court has rejected these arguments in Dardic c. Canada (MCI), 2001 FCT 150, [2001] F.C.J. No. 326 (T.D.) (QL), Tahir v. Canada (MCI) (1998), 159 F.T.R. 109 (T.D.), and Lam v. Canada (MCI) (1998), 152 F.T.R. 316 (T.D.).

¶16 In Lam, supra Rothstein J. states at paragraphs 3 and 4:

3. At best, the applicant must be saying that his application is ambiguous and that when he included in his work history that he was a manager/trainee and assistant manager at McDonald's, that this placed the onus on the visa officer to inquire, through a personal interview, whether those occupations gave him training or experience as a Chef-Cook. However, if correct, this argument gives an advantage to applicants for permanent residence who file ambiguous applications. This cannot be correct.

A visa officer may inquire further if he or she considers a further enquiry is warranted. Obviously, a visa officer cannot be wilfully blind in assessing an application and must act in good faith. However, there is no general obligation on a visa officer to make further inquiries when an application is ambiguous. The onus is on an applicant to file a clear application together with such supporting documentation as he or she considers advisable. The onus does not shift to the visa officer and there is no entitlement to a personal interview if the application is ambiguous or supporting material is not included.

- ¶17 And in Dardic, supra at paragraphs 18 and 19, Heneghan J. concludes on similar facts to the present case, that states at paragraphs 18 and 19:
 - [...]

¶18 I agree with this reasoning. It would be an unfair advantage to schedule interviews for persons who have failed to complete their applications, and a waste of time and resources to attempt to assess an application on eligibility grounds, based on incomplete information. This application for judicial review must therefore be dismissed.

[27] Finally, the applicant argues that the grounds on which the visa officer's decision was based, regarding the lack of ties needed to ensure his return to Tunisia, are not enough for her to determine whether errors were indeed made in assessing the evidence.

[28] The respondent, in turn, states that there is no need for this court to examine the adequacy of the reasons given, as the applicant was required to ask the visa officer to further explain her decision before applying for a judicial review on the grounds of inadequate reasons. As noted by Justice James Russel in *Singh v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration)*, 2006 FC 315, [2006] F.C.J. No. 387 (QL), at para 23:

[...] The Applicant did not express a concern over the adequacy of reasons and did not seek further elucidation from the Officer. So the Applicant cannot complain about the adequacy of reasons now because the case law is clear that before seeking judicial review of a tribunal's decision on the grounds of inadequate reasons there is an obligation on the Applicant to request further reasons from the tribunal. See: *Marine Atlantic Inc. v. Canadian Merchant Service Guild*, [2000] F.C.J. No. 1217 (C.A.) (QL) at paras. 4-6; *Liang v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration)*, [1999] F.C.J. No. 1301 (T.D.) (QL) at para 32; *Hayama v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration)*, 2003 CF 1305, [2003] F.C.J. No. 1642 (QL) at paras. 14 and 15.

[29] Without any evidence that the applicant expressed concerns to the visa officer, this ground therefore cannot be raised in this judicial review.

- [30] For these reasons, the application for judicial review is dismissed.
- [31] The parties have not submitted any questions for certification.

JUDGMENT

- 1. The application for judicial review is dismissed.
- 2. There are no questions to be certified.

"Pierre Blais"

Judge

APPENDIX A

RELEVANT LEGISLATIVE EXCERPTS

Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, S.C. 2001, c. 27 (the Act)

11. (1) A foreign national must, before entering Canada, apply to an officer for a visa or for any other document required by the regulations. The visa or document shall be issued if, following an examination, the officer is satisfied that the foreign national is not inadmissible and meets the requirements of this Act.

39. A foreign national is inadmissible for financial reasons if they are or will be unable or unwilling to support themself or any other person who is dependent on them, and have not satisfied an officer that adequate arrangements for care and support, other than those that involve social assistance, have been made. **11.** (1) L'étranger doit, préalablement à son entrée au Canada, demander à l'agent les visa et autres documents requis par règlement, lesquels sont délivrés sur preuve, à la suite d'un contrôle, qu'il n'est pas interdit de territoire et se conforme à la présente loi.

39. Emporte interdiction de territoire pour motifs financiers l'incapacité de l'étranger ou son absence de volonté de subvenir, tant actuellement que pour l'avenir, à ses propres besoins et à ceux des personnes à sa charge, ainsi que son défaut de convaincre l'agent que les dispositions nécessaires autres que le recours à l'aide sociale — ont été prises pour couvrir leurs besoins et les siens.

Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations, SOR/2002-227 (the Regulations)

213. Subject to sections 214 and 215, in order to study in Canada, a foreign national shall apply for a study permit before entering Canada.

213. Sous réserve des articles 214 et 215, l'étranger qui cherche à étudier au Canada doit, préalablement à son entrée au Canada, faire une demande de permis d'études.

216. (1) Subject to subsections

216. (1) Sous réserve des

(2) and (3), an officer shall issue a study permit to a foreign national if, following an examination, it is established that the foreign national

(*a*) applied for it in accordance with this Part;
(*b*) will leave Canada by the end of the period authorized for their stay under Division 2 of Part 9;
(*c*) meets the requirements of this Part; and
(*d*) meets the requirements of section 30;
(*e*) [Repealed, SOR/2004-167, s. 59]

(2) Paragraph (1)(b) does not apply to persons described in section 206 and paragraphs 207(c) and (d).

(3) An officer shall not issue a study permit to a foreign national who intends to study in the Province of Quebec — other than under a federal assistance program for developing countries — and does not hold a *Certificat d'acceptation du Québec*, if the laws of that Province require that the foreign national hold a *Certificat d'acceptation du Québec*.

220. An officer shall not issue a study permit to a foreign national, other than one described in paragraph 215(1)(d) or (e), unless they have sufficient and available financial resources, without

paragraphes (2) et (3), l'agent délivre un permis d'études à l'étranger si, à l'issue d'un contrôle, les éléments suivants sont établis : a) l'étranger a demandé un permis d'études conformément à la présente partie; *b*) il quittera le Canada à la fin de la période de séjour qui lui est applicable au titre de la section 2 de la partie 9; c) il remplit les exigences prévues à la présente partie; d) il satisfait aux exigences prévues à l'article 30. e) [Abrogé, DORS/2004-167, art. 59]

(2) L'alinéa (1)b) ne
s'applique pas aux personnes
visées à l'article 206 et aux
alinéas 207c) et d).

(3) Le permis d'études ne peut être délivré à l'étranger qui cherche à étudier dans la province de Québec autrement que dans le cadre d'un programme fédéral d'aide aux pays en voie de développement — et qui ne détient pas le certificat d'acceptation exigé par la législation de cette province. DORS/2004-167, art. 59.

220. À l'exception des personnes visées aux sousalinéas 215(1)*d*) ou *e*), l'agent ne délivre pas de permis d'études à l'étranger à moins que celui-ci ne dispose, sans qu'il lui soit nécessaire

Canada-Quebec Accord relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens, February 5, 1991 (the Canada-Quebec Accord)

12. Subject to sections 13 to 20,

(a) Québec has sole responsibility for the selection of immigrants destined to that province and Canada has sole responsibility for the admission of immigrants to that province. (b) Canada shall admit any immigrant destined to Québec who meets Québec's selection criteria, if the immigrant is not in an inadmissible class under the law of Canada. (c) Canada shall not admit any immigrant into Québec who does not meet Québec's

selection criteria.

12. Sous réserve des articles 13 à 20 :

a) Le Québec est seul responsable de la sélection des immigrants à destination de cette province et le Canada est seul responsable de l'admission des immigrants dans cette province. b) Le Canada doit admettre tout immigrant à destination du Québec qui satisfait aux critères de sélection du Québec, si cet immigrant n'appartient pas à une catégorie inadmissible selon la loi fédérale. c) Le Canada n'admet pas au Québec un immigrant qui ne satisfait pas aux critères de sélection du Québec.

22. Québec's consent is required in order to admit into

22. Le consentement du Québec est requis avant l'admission

the province:

dans la province:

(a) any foreign student, except a student chosen under a Canadian government assistance program for developing countries;

APPENDIX A

15. Immigrants selected by Québec shall be referred to federal authorities for assessment relating to the admission and the issuance of visas.

20. Québec shall be responsible for:

b) providing prior consent for the granting of entry to any temporary foreign worker whose admission is governed by the requirements concerning the availability of Canadian workers, to any foreign student, or to any visitor coming to receive medical treatment.

ANNEXE A

15. Les candidats sélectionnés par le Québec sont référés aux autorités canadiennes pour fins d'évaluation en fonction des exigences reliées à l'émission des visas et à l'admission.

a) de tout étudiant étranger

qui n'est pas choisi dans le

cadre d'un programme du

gouvernement canadien

d'assistance aux pays en voie de développement;

20. Le Québec:

b) donne son consentement préalable à l'octroi de l'autorisation de séjour à tout travailleur temporaire dont l'admission est régie par les exigences touchant la disponibilité de travailleurs canadiens, à tout étudiant étranger et à tout visiteur venant recevoir des soins médicaux.

FEDERAL COURT

SOLICITORS OF RECORD

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APPEARANCES:	
Nader Trigui	FOR THE APPLICANT
Daniel Latulippe	FOR THE RESPONDENT

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