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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, March 12, 2015**

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**Chair**

**Mr. David Tilson**



## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Thursday, March 12, 2015

• (0850)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)):** We'll call the meeting to order. This is meeting number 41 of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, on Thursday, March 12. We are discussing the supplementary estimates.

We have representatives from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration here. Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk is the acting deputy minister. Good morning to you. I gather you're going to be making brief remarks before we get into a dialogue.

Also here is Tony Matson, who is the assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer. Good morning to you, sir.

Also here is Catrina Tapley, who is the assistant deputy minister of strategic and program policy.

Last but not least, we have a regular, Robert Orr, who comes here every time.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** He is the assistant deputy minister of operations.

Good morning to you, Mr. Orr.

Ms. Vreeswijk, you have the floor.

For how long, Mr. Clerk? Eight minutes, or whatever?

I'll cut you off when we feel you've talked too long.

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk (Acting Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** I don't think you'll have to. My remarks will be quite brief.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I shouldn't be so flippant. We're looking forward to your words.

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** Thank you. There's no problem.

I am absolutely confident that Bob Orr is thrilled to be back here again.

I am pleased, Mr. Chair, to be here to present our supplementary estimates (C) for the fiscal year 2014-15. I'm here with the three ADMs. I'll be brief in order to highlight the most significant items, though of course we're happy to answer any questions on all items in the supplementary estimates.

[Translation]

The most significant allocation in these Supplementary Estimates is \$20.6-million in additional funding to meet our obligations under

the requirements of the Canada-Quebec accord on immigration. As members of this committee are aware, under this accord, the Government of Quebec maintains exclusive responsibility for immigrant settlement and integration services in return for an annual grant from the Government of Canada. The \$20.6-million amount represents the increase of the grant amount in 2014-15 as compared to 2013-14, based on the year-over-year escalator formula set out in the accord, for a total of \$341 million.

[English]

CIC's supplementary estimates also include an allocation of \$3 million to support the reforms of the temporary foreign worker program and the international mobility programs. As you know, Mr. Chair, these reforms encourage the hiring and training of Canadians, limit the use of foreign workers in Canada to those situations where it's needed and appropriate, and ensure that the abuses of the program or of foreign workers by employers will be detected, with consequences for those breaking the rules.

This funding will provide CIC with 6.8 full-time employees to support the activities of the reformed program. Included in the funding is \$1.6 million for ESDC activities, for which the department will invoice CIC.

Other increases in these estimates include \$1.7 million related to the transfer of the International Experience Canada program from DFATD to CIC as of August 2013.

[Translation]

The international experience Canada, or IEC, program gives young Canadians and foreign nationals the opportunity to develop a mutual understanding of other cultures through travel, life, and work experiences abroad and in Canada. With the transfer of the program, the staff and equipment for its management and delivery have moved to CIC.

[English]

DFATD will invoice CIC for its program expenses abroad, and the figure in the estimates reflects this adjustment.

Another increase is \$1 million related to the transfer of the pre-removal risk assessment function from CIC to the IRB. This amount pertains to funding from the period of December 15, 2014 to March 31 of this year, which had already been transferred to IRB to undertake this function. The transfer is delayed pending the outcome of an evaluation of the new asylum system, which is scheduled for later on this year. However, since this function is still within CIC, the IRB is returning this funding.

[Translation]

There are two other increases of note. One is a grant of \$800,000 to the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, which is a charitable organization that has worked closely with CIC to raise awareness of and promote Canadian citizenship. The other is \$600,000 that represents residual funding from 2014-15 Supplementary Estimates (B) related to the introduction of the express entry initiative in January.

• (0855)

[English]

There are also some recurring items, such as those related to services carried out on behalf of CIC by DFATD and Shared Services Canada, as well as those related to advertising, which also appear in these estimates.

Mr. Chair, my colleagues and I will be happy to answer questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you for being so brief. The clerk didn't give me a clock, so thank you very much.

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** We're starting well.

**The Chair:** Indeed.

Mr. Menegakis.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks once again to our officials for appearing before us and for your testimony this morning, Ms. Vreeswijk.

I think everybody in this room knows the importance and the key role immigration plays in Canada's long-term prosperity and our competitiveness on the world stage.

This year we launched the new program express entry, and I see in the supplementary estimates some additional funding has been provided for express entry. Can you expand for us on how these funds will be used?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** I'll introduce the comments and my colleague will jump in.

The express entry funds are supplementary to funds that were provided last fall. When we requested the supplementary (B) funding, the plan had not been finalized. These funds are related to the completion of that amount.

**Ms. Catrina Tapley (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** I would add that those funds relate to additional processing requirements in the Canadian experience class, which is a key component of express entry. As you have noted, Mr. Chair, it's \$600,000 in addition to the multi-year funding CIC has received for this initiative.

In total CIC received \$29.4 million over five years with \$4.2 million ongoing as of 2018-19.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Thank you.

Can you give us an update on how express entry is doing? More specifically, how many rounds of invitations have there been for people to apply, and has there been international interest in the program?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** Thank you for the question.

As you know, the express entry initiative was launched at the beginning of January. We were happy with the initial interest in the program and the response in terms of the number of expressions of interest.

I'll ask Bob Orr to give you the numbers, but we are monitoring this program very closely. It is an important program because it allows us to select candidates and to rank candidates based on the needs of the Canadian labour market. It also ensures those that are selected do well and prosper in the Canadian context.

Bob, would you like to talk a little about the numbers?

**Mr. Robert Orr (Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Certainly.

As the deputy indicated, we're very pleased with the numbers that have shown interest around the world. We had four rounds of invitations—

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Four rounds. Really?

**Mr. Robert Orr:** —and 3,594 individuals have been invited to apply under this program since its inception in January.

They come under a variety of categories. They come under the federal skilled worker program, the federal skilled trades program, the Canadian experience class, and a portion of the provincial nominee program.

The majority of people have had job offers, but it's early days. We're not yet in steady state in terms of having those rounds and who will be drawn from the pool. It's encouraging indeed with the numbers and the interest that has been drawn to this program.

• (0900)

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** We opened that at the end of January, correct? Is that when the first round went out?

**Mr. Robert Orr:** The ability to enter the pool started on January 1, and the first round of invitations was sent out in late January.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** I just want to clarify that you said that the majority of the people have job offers.

**Mr. Robert Orr:** Thus far, but there will be a changing dynamic in terms of who is drawn from the pool as we get more experience, more people in the pool, and so on.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** This leads me to my next question. The government wants to respond to the labour market needs in our country, and so do employers.

On the other end, can you explain how express entry is engaging employers?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** As we developed the express entry system over the last two years, we did broad-based consultations with a wide variety of stakeholders including employers. Certainly, the way the express entry system is structured means that to the degree that there are job offers, we facilitate entry. The link between the demand from employers and the immigration system is very tight.

Over time, as improvements are made to the job bank later this spring, employers will also be able to access the full range of individuals who have indicated an interest, as well as those who are in the job bank. The way the initiative is structured is designed to engage and involve employers, but not exclusively, because human capital attributes are also valued. The way the ranking system works means that those who have strong language skills and education will also be given recognition for those attributes. It is responsive to employers, but it is also responsive to high skill levels and strong language capabilities in both official languages.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Was Citizenship and Immigration in contact with industry leaders prior to the launch, and do you have a gauge of their interest level in the program?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** We did hold a number of round tables with stakeholders including employers. We have also established an employer liaison network, and I'll turn to Catrina to speak about that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you to our witnesses for being here and for your expertise. I appreciate that very much.

I was listening carefully but I want to make sure that I've understood correctly with regard to the express entry.

It's my understanding that the government is spending \$3 million in advertising services to newcomers. Is this exclusively for advertising express entry? I wonder why the money wasn't initially budgeted for these ads.

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** In terms of the \$3 million that appears in the supplementary estimates, at the time that we undertook the process leading into the supplementary estimates, we were going to request an expenditure and access to funds to broaden our advertising campaign for services to newcomers, which was to include a major component on citizenship.

Since that time, plans have shifted and we will not be accessing these funds. These funds will be ring-fenced and we will not be able to use them for other purposes. They will simply be returned to the consolidated revenue fund.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Okay, thank you.

I'd like to pursue the shifting of the plans, but I know that Madam Blanchette-Lamothe would like to ask some questions so I'll give her the opportunity.

• (0905)

[Translation]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Thank you very much.

I would also like to thank the witnesses for being here today.

I have a question concerning the \$3 million allocated to the reform of the temporary foreign worker program. I would like some clarification on that.

Can you tell us exactly how this money will be used? Is the \$3 million provided as one-time funding or will this be ongoing?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** I will begin and then I will defer to my colleague, who will finish answering.

This funding will enable us to hire 6.8 new employees for the fiscal year.

[English]

I'm sorry, I'll just switch because my notes are in English. That's for employer compliance activities. It will allow us, also, to impose tougher consequences on employers who do not follow the temporary foreign worker rules.

[Translation]

This will also allow us to enhance the sharing of information and improve the computer systems associated with the temporary foreign worker program. Funding for Employment and Social Development Canada is included in these expenditures. The department will use the funding to increase the number of inspections of employers, improve the computer system and establish a tip line for people who have complaints about the way the program is being managed.

The \$3-million amount is part of the Supplementary Estimates. When it comes to ongoing funding, that will be \$6.1 million.

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** I have something to add, if I may.

Recently, in February 2015, there was an announcement about additional fees paid by employers who hire foreign workers and are exempt from the labour market impact assessment process. I wondered whether this money will be collected this way, that is, through the fees that employers and employees in this class have to pay.

Are the fees included in the \$3 million or will they be added to that amount? Will this money be used to accomplish the tasks you described, or are we talking about completely different tasks? Can you enlighten us a little more about this distinction?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** The fees were established to ensure that they pay for the program. These fees will be part of the government's consolidated revenue fund. They will be used for the labour market impact assessments, as you said.

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Thank you.

Since I do not have much time left, I will take this opportunity to say that I submitted a motion to the committee yesterday. I will not put the motion on the table today, but it pertains to the study we are conducting on the economic integration of immigrants.

I suggested that we take a break so that we can study a sensitive issue, given the impact it will have on temporary workers starting next April.

[English]

**The Chair:** I think you're going to have to wait 48 hours before you bring that motion.

[Translation]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Yes, that will pertain to the agricultural sector.

I just wanted to say that the motion is on the table and that I hope we can discuss it later. I do not intend to talk about it officially today.  
[English]

**The Chair:** We'll talk about it another time.

You have 30 seconds.

[Translation]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Thank you.

Will the \$3 million allocated to advertising for newcomers be used to publicize the express entry program? Can you tell us more about the funding allocated to advertising?

• (0910)

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** As I said earlier, this funding will be used to increase the service offer to newcomers. That is our plan.

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Those are two different things. How will advertising improve services?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** I will complete my remarks.

When we worked on the supplementary estimates and our requests, that was our intention, but our plans have changed. The funds will be returned to the government's consolidated revenue fund.

[English]

The dollars that were requested are ring-fenced. We would not be using them in this fiscal year.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Vreeswijk.

Mr. McCallum.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

I noticed that expenditures on two programs on multiculturalism are going down—not down by very much, but down. I would have thought that at this juncture such programs would be particularly important. I wonder why the expenditures are going down.

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** Each year we have plans in terms of how to undertake these expenditures. The multiculturalism expenditures are grants and contributions. We work with community organizations to support intercultural exchanges and to support celebrations like Black History Month, which we just did in the month of February. That is the purpose of the funds. We encourage community organizations to make application for these funds, and then we assess them against our terms and conditions. When community organizations make those applications, and they are in line with our terms and conditions, we are then able to release the funds.

**Hon. John McCallum:** So you're saying that the expenditures are going down because the organizations have made fewer applications.

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** It is a matter of having enough applications that line up with the terms and conditions of the programs.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Okay.

The job bank, which I think is a critical part of the express entry system, seems not to be functioning at this time. Am I right in saying it's not functioning? If so, when is it expected to be working?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** First of all, I should clarify that the job bank is a program of the Employment and Social Development department, so I'll keep my comments focused on our roles and responsibilities. The job bank is a complementary program to express entry. When we were developing the express entry system, we were working very closely with Employment and Social Development to ensure that, when we launched, and over the initial stages as we ramp up the program, the job bank would allow employers to access interested immigrants who meet their skill requirements to meet their needs via the job bank. The intent is for these to work together. The job bank is functioning. We are anticipating that there will be enhancements later on this year to ensure that the job bank and the express entry system are working in an integrated and complementary way.

My colleague would like to answer.

**Ms. Catrina Tapley:** There are two parts to the job bank issue. One is for candidates themselves, so a requirement of express entry is that those candidates without a job offer or a provincial nominee certificate are required to register in the job bank. That's happening now.

The second part, with respect to employer functionality in the job bank—and this is what Ms. Vreeswijk was alluding to—is that employers can use the job bank and go in to look for candidates with good human capital skills who are in the express entry pool. That's expected to be functioning soon.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Thank you.

Mr. Chair, while I have the floor, I'd also like to present a motion that I'd presented some time ago, which reads:

That the Committee instruct the Chair to translate and distribute the document provided to the Clerk by Mr. McCallum on February 26, 2015, no later than March 24, 2015.

The motivation for this is that this document has a direct bearing on our study on immigration settlement, so I think it warrants discussion by the committee. It has a bearing not only because it refers to the Conservative base as anti-immigrant, but more specifically because it appears to predetermine the outcomes of this study before we've even heard the witnesses.

I would like to present that motion at this time.

• (0915)

**The Chair:** Mr. McCallum, as you know and as I said to you in the last meeting, in camera, I might add, the document that you produced for us will not be accepted by this table. It was out of order for the reasons given then, and the same reasons apply now. Such a motion is completely out of order and will not be debated.

Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr. Leung.

**Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, officials, for attending today.

I wish to focus my thoughts on citizenship. I notice that in here, under the fourth item, there's an allocation of \$800,000 for the Institute for Canadian Citizenship. I'd like you to give this committee a little bit more detail regarding what this institute does. What is its mandate? Who is it led by?

The reason I'm asking these questions is that I thought that the overall citizenship process was under CIC, and that we did our citizenship education through LINC classes and citizenship classes. I just want to know how the ICC fits into that overall picture of strengthening the Canadian Citizenship Act.

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** It is certainly true that the department works to provide services to those interested in applying for Canadian citizenship. It provides information and documentation in order to ensure that permanent residents can apply, and can prepare for citizenship testing and oath-taking.

The Institute for Canadian Citizenship is a charitable organization. It was established in 2006 to raise awareness and promote citizenship. It was founded and is co-chaired by the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson and Mr. John Ralston Saul. It features a lot of successful programs, such as the cultural access pass, which allows new citizens to access cultural organizations across Canada. It received an initial grant from the Government of Canada of \$3 million in 2006-07, and under a formal agreement approved by the Treasury Board, the government has committed to matching funding for the ICC, so that when it raises funds annually, the government matches those.

In this final year of the matching agreement, the grant amount that we will be paying to the ICC is \$800,000, which appears in the supplementary estimates.

**Mr. Chungsen Leung:** Last year we approved the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act. We also probably welcomed the greatest number of citizens into Canada. I understand that this is the first reform of the Citizenship Act in almost 38 years since the last reform in 1977.

Can you give us a comparison of our numbers in 2014 after the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act came into effect versus what it was before, please?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** Sure, and I'll turn to Bob Orr as well to support me on this.

Certainly, we did undertake significant Citizenship Act changes, which were approved by Parliament last year. A number of these did come into effect over the last year, in particular, the new decision-maker model, which streamlined the way that decisions were made so that the period of time that permanent residents have to wait for their applications to be processed could be streamlined. We began to implement that immediately after the legislation came into force last August. We were able to accelerate to a significant degree the annual processing of citizenship applications. In fact, last year we approved more citizenship applications than we had in Canadian history. So we are very happy with the initial results of the rollout of these citizenship changes within the decision-maker model.

Bob, I'm sure, will have some stats for you.

● (0920)

**Mr. Robert Orr:** As the deputy mentioned, last year we welcomed the highest number of new citizens in Canadian history, 262,550 new citizens in 2014. That compares with the previous year of 2013's total of 129,029 individuals. It more than doubled in 2014.

Under the new decision-maker model we're very much on track to eliminate the citizenship application backlog. We're working to achieve a working inventory next fiscal year, in 2015-16. Likewise, we are reducing processing times. We're very much on track to meet the processing time commitment to have cases processed in 12 months by 2015-16. Indeed, the applications received since the new streamlined decision-maker model was put in place are already normally being processed in less than a year.

**Mr. Chungsen Leung:** Can you share with me the improvement in the processing time in terms of months? What was it prior to the implementation of the new system versus the old system? Second, what are the numbers in the inventory, in the applications coming through, for 2014 and up?

**Mr. Robert Orr:** The processing times themselves, when you look at them as a block, are rather difficult. We're now working through some old cases, and that inevitably means processing times go up before they come down again.

What I think is important is that we are on track to meet that commitment, by the end of March 2016, that we will be below 12 months, having worked through the inventory of cases. I think that's the important part. Already 30% of cases are now being processed in less than 12 months. We're already starting to see some improvements for new cases coming through the system. As the older routine and non-routine cases are cleared from the inventory, that's when we're really going to see the impact on processing times overall for citizenship.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Orr.

Ms. Mathysen.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Thank you.

I want to pursue something you said, Madam Vreeswijk, in regard to plans that have shifted. I wonder if you could go into some detail on that. Exactly what were you referring to there?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** When we prepare the supplementary estimates, like all departments, we go to the Treasury Board and we seek approval, expenditure authority, from the Treasury Board. Once the Treasury Board approves that expenditure authority, these are prepared for supplementary estimates. In order to facilitate the preparation of the supplementary estimates, these plans and these approvals are sought well in advance of the tabling of the supplementary estimates.

The intent of these funds was to have expenditures related to the newcomer program. The approvals would have been sought last fall. Since that time the plans have shifted, and the funds, as they are ring-fenced funds, will simply go back to the consolidated revenue fund. This is prudent management in that when we feel that we need to access funds, we seek the approvals. They are included in supplementary estimates. But if we do not access the funds, they simply go back to the consolidated revenue fund.

So it is plans that we had in the fall that, here in March, we will not be utilizing.

● (0925)

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Now, I understand that the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is paying the department for International Experience Canada staff. How many staff does that cover? You talked about working on backlogs and improving processing time. Are those folks working full time on assessing applications and promoting the program? Does the department have staff assigned to promoting the program in Canada, or is it just abroad?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** The International Experience Canada program was transferred to CIC in 2013. This program is a vote-netted program, so under the public accounts we have to report all of it within CIC's expenditures. What these supplementary estimates are essentially doing is that those funds that were previously in DFATD are simply being moved into the CIC estimates and DFATD will charge us for that. In this way Parliament can see the full expenditure of the program.

In terms of how we promote the program, this is an important program both for Canadians and for young people from abroad. We have 32 agreements. What we are trying to do is to promote it to both young Canadians as well as young people abroad. Foreign Affairs works with us to do that promotion abroad and we are trying to promote it here in Canada as well, so that young people take the opportunities to gain global experience and bring back what they've learned to Canada.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** I want to shift gears a little bit. We know that the refugee determination system reforms of December 2012 included a transfer of responsibility for pre-removal risk assessment from CIC to the IRB. I wondered if you could provide us with an update in regard to this transfer of responsibility. How is it working? Is it effective? What's the impact of that particular transfer?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** The intent was to transfer this responsibility, but the transfer is being delayed. We are planning an evaluation of the new asylum system later on this year, in 2015-16 to be exact, so that transfer has not yet occurred. In fact in this supplementary estimate the funds that were transferred to the Immigration and Refugee Board to undertake these activities are being returned to us because we continue to administer this program. Once the evaluation is complete then we will assess the readiness and the transfer.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Vreeswijk.

Mr. Shory.

**Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses as well.

We always talk about how we can have a system where immigrants, new Canadians, have success in Canadian society whether that is economically or in civil society. When we talk about it I believe, this is my belief, that those who have knowledge of one of the official languages have more chances of success, fast and better success. I know that in our Canadian Citizenship Act we have had a requirement of adequate language knowledge since 1947. Recently with the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act we

extended the language and knowledge requirement from 14 to 64 years of age as well.

When we extended this was there any research that showed that language helps new immigrants to succeed more quickly, and to succeed in a better manner? When we extended this age, why did we need to extend the age and what are we looking for as an outcome?

● (0930)

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** I will reply, but I'll also turn to the ADM who's responsible for research within our department, the ADM policy staff.

Certainly, when we look at the research and determinants of good outcomes for immigrants, having language skills and having a post-secondary education, those two determinants are critical. There is evidence in terms of how well they integrate into the labour market and how resilient they are when there's a downturn. Also, the express entry system gives significant points in recognition of this. Those immigrants who have solid official languages skills do very well in terms of integration, particularly in comparison to those who do not.

It is for those reasons that we have placed throughout the immigration system as well as the citizenship system such an emphasis on official languages skills. Even when you look at the settlement program, the training and support we give new immigrants so that they can obtain these skills is significant, and we do this in collaboration with community service providers.

So the reasons that we have integrated it so closely throughout all of our programming is based on the evidence and that research.

Did you want to add anything?

**Ms. Catrina Tapley:** With respect to citizenship, I would just add the requirement, as the member has noted, has been in place since 1947, since the first act of Canadian citizenship. The requirement is for a Canadian language benchmark 4, which is a pretty basic level of speaking English or French. We feel it's part of good citizenship, as was the intent of the act.

The changes that came in were changes on wanting evidence of language ability. We have a very broad range of evidence that we'll accept. For those who have completed secondary or post-secondary education in English or French, we will accept that. We accept as evidence the results of the completion of studies of those who come through language training programs with us, or with certain provinces as well.

Also, as Ms. Vreeswijk has indicated, we feel it helps significantly with integration. As she noted, it is the single biggest factor in effective integration. To put it the other way, the single biggest barrier to effective integration in settlement in Canada is not having an official language, neither English nor French.

**Mr. Devinder Shory:** Let me ask you a quick question on what I believe, but I want to confirm it. Do you think integration into civil society is a factor in the success of a new immigrant? When I say "into civil society", I mean when we talk about other privileges, etc. If new immigrants know about their responsibilities and they go volunteer with, say, a school sports team or other organizations like that, would that help new Canadians to be successful?

**Ms. Catrina Tapley:** We agree, and certainly, Mr. Chair, I have evidence to support that as well. There are a number of factors in effective integration and settlement, and one is community connection or the establishment of a network. There are many ways to do that, through sport or through the work of parents in their children's schools. We have a program there called the settlement workers in schools program.

But the establishment of effective professional, personal, or societal networks are also pretty key to an immigrant's success and really help to overcome that sense of isolation or loneliness that can sometimes happen when new immigrants come to Canada.

● (0935)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Eglinski.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the four board members for coming out today and presenting the supplementary estimates budget. It looks as though it's going to be a very rewarding year coming up. I'd really like to thank you for the express entry program that you just recently brought in.

When you come out with new programs such as express entry and then you invite people into the program who might have been in the LMIA, labour market impact assessment program, or something like that, do you run scenarios by your committee members or yourselves to see the complications? I'm just going to go through a little scenario here.

A gentleman received his ITA—which is an express entry invitation under the Canadian experience class—on February 27, giving him 60 days to apply for his PR. He has a new LMIA and an employment contract, which is part of his express entry profile. However, the new LMIA expires on March 24 of this year. His issue is that he cannot apply to extend his work permit because he has a four-year, cumulative duration limit as of April 1 of this year. It is impossible for him to remit his ITA CIC application for permanent residency along with the required police clearances from the country he's been in and receive a letter of confirmation of application back from the CIC.

Is there some way he could be granted a waiver of his four-year program? We're running into a number of these in our riding for people who have been in the programs. It's not your department's fault. I think it's more Alberta's fault for having great delays in their paper process.

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** You've asked both a policy question and an operations question.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** I'll throw them both in, because they fit together.

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** I'll turn first to the design and how we do that and how we plan these things. Then it's always a little dangerous to get into the specifics of individual cases.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** That's why I didn't mention any names.

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** Perhaps my colleague Mr. Orr would like to respond to that—

**Ms. Catrina Tapley:** To come back to comments that Ms. Vreeswijk made earlier, we worked closely with employers and other interests as we established express entry, including having a technical working group on program design with employers, with some key universities, and with others, to make sure that as much as we possibly could we were going to get it right and avoid as many glitches as possible. That's in addition to two pretty extensive rounds of consultation, which we ran from one end of the country to the other with employers and with a number of groups. I can go on for a bit on that.

With respect to some of the problems you indicated, I'm going to turn it over to Bob, but I will say that we worked with the Government of Alberta to try to come to an agreement on how we could look at ameliorating some of this situation with respect to the cumulative duration rules. I'm happy to report that we do have an agreement in place with Alberta. We're looking at it, potentially, for other provinces as well, but this was in many cases a problem particular to Alberta as you have noted.

Bob.

**Mr. Robert Orr:** Thank you very much.

When we were designing this program, we certainly looked at a whole variety of different situations and scenarios, and we tried to anticipate as much as we could. One of the fascinations of working in the immigration program is that you can never anticipate everything that's going to come up. Obviously, we continue to work through individual circumstances as they arise. As Ms. Tapley indicated, the Alberta situation is one we are very much aware of, including the issue of cumulative duration, so we're trying to work through that. I can't comment on the particular case without all the information, but I would just say that we're very conscious of this issue and we are trying to work through ways to handle it.

● (0940)

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** Are you looking at the compassionate side? Some of these people have been given false hopes and are very jubilant when they get the ITA all of a sudden because they were so frustrated with the old program. But then they get in there and all these little barriers come in. Is there some way for us to look at some of these individuals and tell them that there is a compassionate side, and they're meeting all the criteria but the paperwork is going to take some time?

**Ms. Wilma Vreeswijk:** Certainly, as Mr. Orr indicated, we do run the scenarios. We really do try to ensure that we can anticipate as much as possible. In terms of all of our programs we are aware that they affect real people and their lives.

We are constrained by legislation and regulations in what we can and can't do, and we have to respect that. As Ms. Tapley outlined, we've just come up with an agreement with Alberta to help resolve some of these transitional issues.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madame Blanchette-Lamothe.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to follow up on Mr. Eglinski's questions, which were very interesting.

Currently there is great concern in the farming community across Canada because of these specificities.

Ms. Tapley, you have concluded agreements with Alberta. You said you were trying to see whether it would be possible to enter into agreements with the other provinces. Could you tell us precisely what is being done in this regard?

I come from Quebec, where many farmers' groups are very concerned about the prospect of losing all their temporary workers at the same time.

Why have agreements with the other provinces not been concluded? What is being done right now to help the farming community across Canada?

**Ms. Catrina Tapley:** Thank you.

There is a special agreement between Canada and Quebec. Quebec is responsible for almost all elements of the immigration and settlement program, particularly with regard to temporary foreign workers in the agricultural sector.

[*English*]

Under the changes to the temporary foreign worker program, by and large, the seasonal agricultural worker program was unchanged. Some of the changes that the other member was referring to don't apply to the seasonal agricultural worker program, and we don't anticipate others. In the situation in Alberta there were a number of

candidates in line for the provincial nominee program who the Alberta government felt confident they were going to nominate, but they had a bit of backlog in their provincial nominee program. We struck an agreement to work with the Government of Alberta on some of those candidates in their provincial nominee program that had been there with valid LMIA's before a certain period of time. It was quite a particular group of circumstances.

With respect to seasonal agricultural workers, they shouldn't be affected by the same issues that the other member was referring to.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Tapley.

I think that concludes our session with supplementary estimates, and I want to thank you, Ms. Vreeswijk and your colleagues, for visiting with us this morning and answering the questions from the members.

The witnesses are now excused. Thank you very much.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Vote 1c—Operating expenditures.....\$6,661,362

Vote 5c—The grants listed in the Estimates and contributions.....\$21,378,333

(Votes 1c and 5c agreed to)

**The Chair:** Shall the Chair report the same to the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** I will do so after the break.

The meeting is adjourned.







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