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Chair

Mr. Bryan May

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.)): Good afternoon everybody.

We are back here again after a break week. We're going to get very quickly into the temporary foreign worker program study again. Before that, though, there are just a few quick points I want to make.

I want to confirm with members that if they want to submit recommendations for the report on the TFW study or ask if the analysts should draft them, I think we had agreed that we were going to be sending them recommendations. If members would like to submit their own recommendations, the committee should agree on a deadline, and the deadline that has been recommended is June 3. Is there any discussion needed on that?

The analysts would like to propose that the first draft of the report of the TFW study be distributed to members on Friday, June 10, instead of June 8 as we had originally planned. This has to do with giving proper consideration to translation. Translation has pushed back and asked for a little bit more time. The review in committee would start as scheduled on Monday, June 13. Are there any questions or concerns about the extension for translation?

Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): I think that to do the entire report within the next week is going to be a challenge at best. I hope the quality isn't sacrificed for expediency.

The Chair: I agree and I have spoken with the analysts on this, and they're well on their way. The extension is more for the translators so that we get it properly translated. Is there anything else?

Just as a reminder, we are asking the departments back in our third panel, but we will have to cut that a little bit short. We have to be in the House when, at 6:30?

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): At 6:30.

The Chair: We will get the votes at 6:30 and so we would leave here at, say, 10 minutes after six. Is that reasonable?

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): So are we doing three rounds again?

The Chair: Yes. We had to cut, if you will recall, the department officials in the first session, and we had asked that they come back to do our due diligence with them. That's what we have in the third round.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Chair, if your proposal is that we continue after the bells start ringing, what is...

The Chair: The bells will start ringing at 6:15 and we'd actually leave five minutes before that. That is what I am proposing.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Okay. Fine.

The Chair: Thank you.

Without further ado, I would like to introduce our first panel. As individuals we have Jamie Liew, immigration lawyer and law professor, faculty of law, common law section, University of Ottawa. Welcome.

We also have—and I'm probably going to get this wrong—Pinky Paglingayen. Is that pronunciation even close?

Ms. Pinky Paglingayen (As an Individual): Yes.

The Chair: Thank you for lying a little bit there. She is joining us by video conference from Toronto, Ontario.

We also have from National Cattle Feeders' Association, Casey Vander Ploeg, manager of policy and research. Welcome, sir.

From the Hotel Association of Canada, we have Anthony P. Pollard, president. Welcome, sir.

Seeing as we have three different groups here today, we are going to limit the opening statements to seven minutes, and then we'll have questions after that.

Either Jamie or Pinky, whoever is planning to speak, you have seven minutes. Thank you.

Ms. Jamie Liew (Immigration Lawyer and Law Professor, Faculty of Law, Common Law Section, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and honourable members. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Jamie Liew. I'm an immigration and refugee lawyer and a professor of law at the University of Ottawa. My presentation to you today will be shared with Pinky Paglingayen, a migrant worker, who can tell you about her experience directly.

I appreciate that this review is complex, and understanding this, I have included in my written submissions a copy of the Canadian Council for Refugees' written submissions. I want to endorse this submission, and in my presentation to you today, you will see that I share their concerns.

In my written submissions I offer six recommendations, but given our short time today, I will speak to only my four long-term recommendations. Just for your reference, my short-term recommendations include doing away with tied work permits and offering open work permits and giving migrant workers access to settlement services.

Looking at the visionary goals of how to reform this program, I would first recommend making the program a pathway to permanent residence. Many foreign workers do some of the most difficult work in our society, which allows our communities to function, including picking the fruit we eat, cleaning our toilets, and caring for our children, elderly, and dying. These tasks will always need to be done.

Addressing long-term labour needs via short-term disposable labour creates a two-tiered society with a growing population of workers who have access to fewer rights than others and who are not permitted to integrate and further contribute to Canadian society. As this committee heard two weeks ago, this program already provides an important source of permanent residence for Canadians.

My second recommendation is to eliminate the four-in, four-out rule. Limiting migrant workers in Canada to working for four years and prohibiting these people from working in Canada for four years afterwards reinforces the temporary nature of the program. However, much of the labour demand is not temporary and rips from our society contributing members who have been trained and integrated into communities.

I have one client who gave four years of her life to care for brain-injured and dying Canadians as a personal support worker. She eventually obtained her licence to work as a registered nurse, and she is now facing the prospect of leaving the life she built here in Canada despite the contributions she has made. She is trained, established, and yet disposable.

My third recommendation is to allow family reunification.

Temporary foreign workers are separated from their families for four years or more, and while many Canadians take for granted that we can go home from a day's work to our children, migrant workers suffer from stress, anxiety, and depression as a result of family separation. Preventing spouses and children from joining these workers causes significant hardship, particularly to women who have to negotiate and manage child care arrangements from long distances. They have to watch their children grow up from a distance.

Finally, I want to recommend that work permits be offered to sex workers. I want to highlight that some migrant workers in Canada do not have access to work permits and that this should be reconsidered. In particular the committee should consider how the lack of status can affect trafficked persons and particularly how exotic dancers or sex workers can be driven underground, increasing risks of abuse and exploitation.

Increased police raids and surveillance of strip clubs, massage parlours, and escort agencies have led migrant workers to go further underground or risk deportation. Afraid of deportation, these women are less likely to come forward to police when they are victims of violence and exploitation. While there may be efforts to investigate and prosecute trafficking and criminal offences tied to sex work, these actions will not increase the safety of migrant sex workers in their working environment. Recognizing these women as foreign workers would help them obtain the protection they need.

I want to welcome Pinky Paglingayen to share her thoughts. Before I do, I just want to highlight the fact that I wanted to share my time with a migrant worker today and I canvassed many people, including some of my clients, many of whom were too afraid to come forward even with the promise of anonymity. So I want to thank Pinky for being courageous enough to come before this committee today to share her experience.

● (1540)

Ms. Pinky Paglingayen: Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for having me.

My name is Pinky Paglingayen. I came here in 2004 from the Philippines under the live-in caregiver program. I was employed by a family of four in Thornhill, Ontario. This family demanded that I pay \$3,000 in exchange for their helping me to come here. I felt as if I had no choice. Several days later they released me from my employment. That's when I felt so cheated, abandoned, and alone.

In 2006, I moved to Oakville to work for another family, but was dismissed when my employer found out in 2007 that I was pregnant. My employer did not give me my last paycheque and vacation pay. As a result my OHIP was cut off because I was on an open permit and not yet a permanent resident. I felt as if my rights as a worker were not respected simply because my employer did not like the fact that I was pregnant. I had no choice but to leave because I did not want anything to jeopardize my ability to stay in Canada, and also to obtain my permanent resident status here.

After almost 10 years I still see the same issues that I faced happening to many caregivers and temporary foreign workers. That is why, since gaining my permanent residency here, I've made it my job and life mission to support other caregivers and temporary foreign workers. Over the years I've met with hundreds of such migrant workers across the country. Their stories are similar to mine, sometimes better, sometimes much worse. The same exploitation by recruiters, asking for more fees, the same mistreatment and abuse by employers. All the migrant workers I know want one thing, and that is basic human dignity. They want the same rights as everyone else. They want to be with their loved ones. You have the ability right now to change the laws that impact migrant workers, and that means full permanent residency rights and expedited family reunification for workers in the country. The ability to apply for permanent residency should be extended to other members of the temporary foreign worker program. Future migrant workers should come with full permanent residency, family reunification, and real labour rights. That's all we want to see happening in the future.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much for those very passionate opening remarks. I'm sure we'll be asking further questions about your experience.

Moving on to our next speaker, Mr. Vander Ploeg, from the National Cattle Feeders' Association, you have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg (Manager, Policy and Research, National Cattle Feeders' Association): Good afternoon.

I'm Casey Vander Ploeg and I serve as the manager of policy and research with the National Cattle Feeders' Association. NCFA represents cattle feeding operations across Canada.

Today's cattle feeding operations are highly sophisticated endeavours and employ a range of proven production technologies that result in some of the most affordable, nutritious, and safest beef in the world. I thank the committee for providing this opportunity to share our perspectives on labour and the temporary foreign worker program.

Without any reservation whatsoever, I contend that the single largest issue facing Canadian agriculture today is a shortage of labour that is chronic, pervasive, and severe. This is challenging our competitiveness today and threatening our prospects for growth and export opportunities tomorrow.

Agriculture has the highest job vacancy rate of any industry in Canada at seven per cent. This is no small deal.

Agriculture and agrifood generates eight per cent of national GDP and the beef industry is an anchor for Canadian agriculture, our most valuable agricultural product. Canada is home to 10 million beef cattle and we process about three million head annually, generating \$10.5 billion in farm cash receipts.

Just to give you a sense of the scale, consider the beef plant in High River, Alberta. That facility can process up to 4,000 head a day, which translates into two million pounds of boxed beef shipped daily.

Yes, agriculture is an important player in our economy, and it could be even more so, but it simply cannot until our labour challenges are addressed.

The first challenge is the labour shortage at the feedlot itself.

To be competitive, cattle feeders need a reliable, skilled, and competent workforce. Employment at a feedlot is not seasonal. These cattle represent an investment of tens of millions of dollars and require care 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Labour shortages are not an option, because they impact the health and welfare of animals.

Yet it's very difficult to find, attract, and retain sufficient domestic workers. The reasons are many. We're not graduating enough people with the right skills. These jobs are located in rural Canada, away from the pool of labour in urban areas. The work is dusty, it's dirty, and difficult. It's no surprise that in Alberta mounting layoffs in oil and gas have not translated into increased applications at feedlots.

Hiring Canadians has always been and always will be our first priority. But the reality is that despite extensive efforts, the feedlot sector is not able to secure enough Canadian workers. Increasingly, it has been forced to rely on the temporary foreign worker program to augment the Canadian workforce.

Bringing in these workers is expensive and time-consuming. Yet they are paid the same as Canadians and are provided with housing, transportation, and benefits as well. The red tape and lack of timeliness associated with the process is burdensome, and recent changes to the program have made access more difficult.

As an industry we're doing our part. The Alberta Cattle Feeders have invested hundreds of thousands in a new recruitment campaign. Another example is the work of the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council, whom you will hear from later. Over five dozen agriculture and agrifood organizations support the council and its agriculture and agrifood workforce action plan.

The second challenge concerns labour shortages in meat processing facilities.

Beef production is a complex value chain and all components of that chain have to operate at full capacity to be competitive. Cattle feeders are impacted by labour shortages in our beef processing plants. Later you will hear from processors, and we unequivocally support the solutions they will present to this committee as well.

Working in a meat plant is work that most Canadians do not want and will not do. Immigrants and temporary foreign workers are essential for the packing industry. Each day, Canada's meat processing establishments operate with hundreds of empty work stations, and they are presently seeking over 1,000 workers. That labour shortage is making Canadian plants uncompetitive. It prevents us from harnessing new export opportunities such as CETA and TPP.

We view the challenges in the processing sector as our very own challenge because uncompetitive plants are plants that run the risk of closure, and for beef that would be devastating and, likely, unrecoverable.

• (1545)

In terms of solutions, I would urge the committee to consider the following: We need more and better engagement with governments so our unique needs are recognized and efficient programs are designed. We encourage the committee to closely examine the recommendations found in Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's workforce action plan. We encourage government to continue streamlining the administration and timelines of the program. We need to ensure that the program works for the meat processing sector and that the entire beef production chain is competitive and sustainable, and that we do not drive processing out of Canada. We need to consider giving priority to low-skilled immigrants to more accurately reflect the economic and labour needs of an evolving Canada. We need to ensure that successful foreign workers are provided with a streamlined pathway to permanent residency, whether through the federal express entry or some other program. Also, we could consider creating a single office or centre of specialization for the agriculture stream to ensure that there are knowledgeable staff and timely labour market impact assessments and work permit processing.

In short, we believe that the federal government must show leadership in helping craft solutions to our labour shortages. Key here is fixing access to temporary foreign workers and the temporary foreign worker program and, if necessary, even considering the creation of a new, dedicated agriculture and agrifood workforce program.

Finally, we should all realize that exceptions were made for the seafood industry on Canada's east coast. Agriculture and agrifood have a similar challenge, if not a larger one, and attention must be paid to our needs as well.

I thank you for your time and giving consideration to our suggestions.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

Now I would like to hear from the president of the Hotel Association of Canada, Mr. Pollard. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Anthony Pollard (President, Hotel Association of Canada): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to be back here again with you a couple of weeks after my last time here, but I won't say any more about that.

The Hotel Association of Canada represents all of the lodging industry across Canada. There are about 8,500 hotels. We employ about 288,000 people. In terms of revenues, last year, we did about \$17.5 billion.

I always like to point out, when I come before a committee like this, the tax revenues that are generated by our industry. They total about \$7.6 billion right across the board, and about \$3.3 billion of that goes to the feds. So I like to say we're the good news industry. We actually help pay a lot of bills and we don't ask for a lot in return.

However—and there's always a little bit of a “however” in there—the lodging industry across Canada still suffers from a critical shortage of workers in particular areas, more often in the remote areas. Think of a resort where you may have three or four thousand bedrooms and a very, very small community surrounding it. I have my colleague Darren Reader with me here today from Banff and Lake Louise, and we can point out, for example, that in a place like the Fairmont Banff, we employ about 400 temporary foreign workers every year simply because there are not the people there to do the work.

We continue to go out and try to engage as many Canadians as we possibly can, and we also try to hire indigenous people. We still have severe shortages.

When the reforms took place in 2014, limiting it to 10% of a company's workforce and looking at what the unemployment rate is and so forth, it just didn't work. Most communities have an unemployment rate that is above 6% and hotels couldn't qualify. We're saying we need to take into account the seasonal-demand nature of our work. As a result of this and as a result of the changes that we saw the minister implement in March of this year, which we commended the government and the minister for making and we said were a really good thing to be doing, at the end of the day, we still have seasonal problems right across the board. That's why we need to be able to have a seasonal lodging worker program.

I mentioned the measures the government took in March outside the 10% cap limit and so forth, and again as I said, we applauded Minister Mihychuk for that. We are pleased that the government is recognizing the seasonality, and we do want to move forward with the development of a program for us.

In closing, we need more than stop-gap measures. We need a long-term permanent solution to what we have right now.

I know that Fort Mac is still at the top of our agenda as it is in a lot of places. Let me just tell you right now that we lost two of our hotels up there. There is an immediate demand for at least 125 workers to go up there and start reopening. When I say immediate, I mean immediate, right now. We don't have them, and we can't get them.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, at any given time, you probably wonder how many people under the old program are actually working in hotels. The number is about 10,000. About 5,000 were in Alberta. Obviously that has changed there, but there are different factors going on. The other 5,000 out of the roughly 290,000 that we have were spread across the country .

I heard my friend talking about the cattle industry, and he said it goes 365 days a year. Well, you know what? In the hotel business, we don't close our doors unless we're forced to. So what we're looking for from you people is your help so we can keep our doors open.

Thank you very much.

• (1555)

The Chair: Now we'll go to questions.

The first round of six minutes goes to Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I'll start with the cattle feeders.

Casey, it's good to have you back. I think we've gotten to know each other a little bit over the years as a result of my being on the agriculture committee and seeing the battle cattle feeders have with getting product out to Canadians and getting good Canadian beef out to consumers who want to consume it.

I'm concerned, as you are, with the lack of positions in this industry. As you said, from the industry itself, there are 10 million beef cattle and \$10.5 billion in receipts. Although we certainly want to hire Canadian workers, and that's going to be one of my questions, I guess I'm concerned by the lack of Canadians stepping up to do these kinds of jobs which the industry can move elsewhere. I think most of us in the room know that the beef industry is not protected by supply management. It can go different places, and Canadians will be net importers of beef products as opposed to exporters, which we want to be. What is the typical shortage of workers where it is now? Also, what is the process for attempting to hire Canadian workers? We'll start with the first question and move onto number two.

Go ahead, Casey.

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: It really runs the gamut. If you have a 25,000-head feeding operation, you're looking at an employed force of anywhere between 60 and 70 people. The job descriptions are varied. A pen rider sounds like a fairly simple job but this individual will be on a horse going through the pens of cattle. His or her job is to identify and diagnose sick animals. When they find one, the animal is pulled, brought to the hospital—a building at the feed yard—and then treated. It's a very important job, one that if it isn't conducted well, results in the loss of thousands of dollars.

There's the experience of a feedlot in Manitoba, which is looking to hire a veterinary technician. This is not a full veterinarian. They've looked across the country and cannot find a large animal vet tech. So they're looking to bring in a foreign worker to fill that job.

The needs are varied. There has been a bright light for cattle feeders. When the reforms were announced by the previous government, feedlots were designated as primary agriculture. That meant that some of the changes did not apply to our sector and that was beneficial.

I think the biggest concern of the cattle feeding sector right now is what's happening in our processing plants. If those plants are not efficient and competitive, they run the risk of closing. If that were to happen—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I just have a few minutes. What could happen to the beef industry in Canada if the temporary foreign worker program isn't fixed in a manner that supplies you with the workers you need?

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: If it resulted in the closure of a beef plant it would be devastating. That is a potential outcome. If it's not being resolved at the feedlot level, you will see production simply decline because there are not enough workers to carry on production.

• (1600)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Pollard, part of the reasons why we tried to fix the temporary foreign worker program was that we heard about different abuses in the system. The question I am asked as a parliamentarian is why are Canadians not being asked to fill these jobs first? I know the other side well enough to know that the LMIA's, the requests for workers, often go unanswered. Could you explain, on behalf of the hotel industry, how many spots go unanswered that you're looking to fill with TFWs?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: I mentioned Fort Mac; that's an extreme situation. At any given time over the last several years, we employed about 10,000 people under the program, out of the 350,000 or so who were part of it.

Travel and tourism is growing at about 5%, a hell of a lot more than GDP or anything else. We are going to be experiencing a lot more shortages. Various studies say between 30,000 and 40,000 people in the next five years.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Just in your industry alone?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: In our industry alone.

In Banff and Lake Louise a comprehensive study was done that shows that even with all the advertising, even with reaching out to everybody.... By the way, we prefer to hire Canadians. It's a lot cheaper than having to fly people in. At the end of the day, we identified another thousand people this year in Banff and Lake Louise.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Wow.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: We'll move over to Ms. Tassi, please.

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Ms. Liew, you spoke about full residency rights. Could you provide recommendations and comments on pathways to permanent residency for low wage workers? What pathways are available and what's the appropriate timeline on these paths?

Ms. Jamie Liew: There are a lot of different models that can be used. At the outset, I think the timelines right now leading to permanent residency are quite lengthy, and some of these people are waiting for years to even submit an application. As you know, sometimes submitting an application can take.... Right now I think the wait time for caregivers to hear back from Immigration about their applications for permanent residency is 40 months. This is completely unreasonable for someone who's given their life and contributed to our society in the manner they have. So at the outset, we need to shorten the times in which people can apply for permanent residency and broaden the category of persons who are eligible for permanent residency.

For example, caregivers are able to apply for permanent residency, but there's a whole slew of temporary workers who are not eligible for permanent residency at all, and the majority are low-skilled workers. Even though my colleagues here have pointed out a lot of different kinds of labour needs in Canada, I think this should be open to all kinds of workers. The fact that we have invested in these people already, that they're already in Canada, already trained, already educated about our culture, already integrated into our societies, and are paying taxes should be enough for Canadians to consider the fact that they are already citizens within our midst and just need to be made official.

My first recommendation would be to shorten the timelines in which they become eligible and, second, that the processing times be expedited for these people.

Tied in with that, I think these people should be treated as permanent residents from the get-go, so they should be able to bring their families along with them. They should be able to travel within and outside Canada and come back. I think the program itself should be modified so they're treated as permanent residents and have a graduated system for obtaining that.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Do you have any direct advice on those timelines? You're saying, "Shorten them."

Ms. Jamie Liew: In my view, the timelines could be developed according to the kind of work they're doing. I understand that there are concerns with regard to persons staying within Canada, staying within the line of work that they will be doing, and things like that. I think the timing should be pretty tight with regard to that.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Okay. Thank you.

My next question is for you, Professor Liew, as well as Ms. Paglingayen.

Before I ask the question, I would just like to congratulate you, Ms. Paglingayen, on your courage and determination for being here today to provide input. All of the witnesses' input is important and valuable, but you offer a unique perspective with your hands-on experience, not only in your own position but also of those you've counselled. I just want to give a special thanks to you, because I'm sure that you are dealing with fear and a lot of other emotions today. We will be taking your advice very seriously, and thank you for the unique perspective that you offer.

My question is for both of you, and you can determine who would like to answer it first. We talk about the ongoing abuse of temporary foreign workers. What mechanisms and resources are currently at the

disposal of temporary foreign workers who suffer these abuses? What recommendations would you make to improve the situation?

• (1605)

Ms. Jamie Liew: Would you like to go first?

Ms. Pinky Paglingayen: I think status is very important, because until we give them permanent resident status here....

I'm sorry. I'm very emotional about this.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Okay. I understand that.

Ms. Pinky Paglingayen: It's going to be very difficult.

Can you imagine me doing the same job almost 10 years ago? It's still happening now. Now I'm a settlement counsellor working with migrant workers, and every day I hear about the abuses and all those things that happened to me. You just can't imagine how difficult it is, not only for me, but particularly for women. They are raising your children here in Canada, and most of them are just seeing their children through Skype. It's so difficult, you know, that they cannot even touch their kids. It's very difficult. As a mother, I feel every emotion that they pour out every time they come to see me. It's very difficult.

At the same time, the abuses have been happening because the work permit is tied to one employer. I'm hoping that, if it's not permanent residency, it can be an open work permit. How do you call that? It's specific to the industry, but they should be able to move around. If they are being abused, they should be able to change their employers. That is something that will probably help a lot of those in caregiving positions.

Their role here is very important to us. They are raising not just our children, but are taking care of our elderly, our seniors. Nobody wants to take these jobs. These women are willing to take these jobs, even after they become permanent residents here. They are studying, going back to that kind of job, being personal support workers, being nurses, and working still in the same caregiving jobs they do. It's very important that we give them something that will help them alleviate these issues they're facing, especially the abuses that have been happening.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll go over to Ms Ramsey, please.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): I echo my colleague Ms. Tassi's comments to you, Ms. Paglingayen, on your courage and your strength to be able to come here today. I come from a riding in southwestern Ontario that has many migrant and temporary foreign workers. I know how difficult it is to come forward and tell your story, so I really do appreciate your sharing this with us today.

Ms. Pinky Paglingayen: Thank you.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: I think that migrant workers need to be heard. They need to have the opportunity to tell their story. I hear there are industries that certainly require workers, and there's a labour shortage and many reasons why.

I'd like to ask my question of Ms. Paglingayen.

It seems that being tied to a single employer for the duration of your pathway to citizenship has brought you and many other workers particular hardships. What is the impact of your immigration status on your ability to have your rights upheld?

Ms. Pinky Paglingayen: Well, during that time when I was working as a caregiver, it was so difficult for me to just quit my job, even if I was already being abused at work, because I wanted to complete the 24 months. During my time it was only three years; now it's four years, but it's still happening to many of them.

Another thing is health care issues. When you switch employers and you don't have the work permit, you cannot renew your OHIP. Clients who have cancer cannot go for treatment because they don't have the necessary health care services. That's one thing. Another thing is they are so scared to tell anyone, even me now, that they're being abused. Some of them are verbally, physically, and sometimes sexually abused, and yet they cannot speak. Sometimes they would call me with no number saying that they needed help. They didn't want to give me their name, but they wanted some advice on what to do, what the next step should be.

These things could be changed. We can do something about this situation.

• (1610)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: As a mother, what you said about being separated from your family in particular is heart-wrenching. Anyone who's a parent in this room can certainly understand the impact of that. I know that in my region recently we held a Mother's Day event so that the migrant women could come forward and Skype with their children. That's just not enough. That's not acceptable. They should be here with their families and contributing to our communities.

There was a previous private member's bill that was introduced that would have centralized caregivers and employers into an agency. My question goes to Professor Liew. This would take the assignment out of the family and centralize it into an agency. We've heard many stories on how recruitment agencies seek out caregivers, but end up exploiting them and charging high fees, as we just heard. If the recruitment agencies would also be the only eligible employers for caregivers, would that not give them more power over caregivers? What are your thoughts on that suggestion?

Ms. Jamie Liew: I think it doesn't answer all of the issues that could arise between a potential employer and a migrant worker. You never know what's going to happen behind closed doors.

I think there are two important things to highlight. First, migrant workers are not necessarily informed or educated as to the system and they could be told one thing by a person whom they're working for, such as that they need to pay for certain fees or that they need to work a certain number of hours. So I think there are still problems with regard to exploitation. Ms. Paglingayen was correct in saying that the source of this issue is the precariousness of the status, and the promise of more permanent status is the way to help take away that exploitation.

The second way I think to do this is through greater enforcement. There is a lot of activity as of late looking at whether people are adhering to the rules or not, but the issue is that the persons who are

working are often punished, as opposed to the persons who are employing these people. I think we need to look at the kinds of enforcement that are taking place and the rules associated with enforcement, and the efforts being made with regards to that should be examined in particular.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: I'm probably running out of time, but I have a quick question for you. I think we all read the article that you published after the meeting that was cancelled. I want to ask you about not only caregivers, but also other streams of low-skilled temporary foreign workers. What are the biggest steps to take so that they will no longer be exploited and will have security?

Ms. Jamie Liew: This may be a radical thought for the committee, and I might have been a little shy in answering Member Tassi's question, but I actually think that many of the jobs that are here are durable and enduring. We will need people to fill these jobs, as my colleagues have said. I think that an important feature of this review could be considering giving permanent residency at the outset to people who are coming to fill certain kinds of work, and that we shouldn't be shy about this because eventually many of these people do stay. I was listening to testimony a couple of weeks ago. One of the experts here had already said that many of the people who come through this program do end up being permanent residents. Taking away that delay, that anxiety, that stress and separation from family members would help to create a healthy environment for immigration that would fill our labour shortage needs.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Ruimy, please.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Welcome everybody, and thank you for some very compelling testimony. My comments are going to be directed to Mr. Vander Ploeg.

First of all, can you tell me the scope of your labour needs: part-time, full-time, seasonal, what's the breakout?

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: These jobs are permanent, full-time. It's not seasonal at all. They're permanent and full-time jobs.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: We all heard in previous testimony, and we hear it all across the country, that we're taking jobs away from Canadians. My next question is on that. What I need to understand a little bit more is the strategy that your business has used to to attempt to attract and retain Canadian workers.

•(1615)

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: We've used numerous strategies, from the traditional newspaper and that's giving way to social media. I'll give you a very interesting example. Lyle Miller, who owns Highway 21 Feeders in Acme, Alberta, now says he gets most of his Canadian workers through Facebook. He starts a conversation with a person on Facebook. They talk a little bit about what they do. Lyle tells them what he does. Eventually through that relationship he may find a Canadian worker. Social media is becoming big. It's a huge part of our awareness and recruitment program as well to reach out and use those new digital tools to get Canadians interested in it.

Despite all of that, though, it still is extremely difficult. There are reasons for it. One is that these jobs are in rural Canada and a lot of the unemployment pressure is in urban Canada. When you have a person who was born in the city of Calgary, raised in Calgary, went to school in Calgary, did his university in Calgary, and secured a white collar job in the oil and gas sector and then lost the job, it's difficult to then to say to this individual there are opportunities 150 miles south of Calgary out on a farm.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: I just want to take this a little bit further, though, because we're not just talking about oil and gas workers. What about tapping into labour markets such as indigenous people and youth?

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: On the youth side of things, that's actually a big concern for all of agriculture given the aging workforce in Canadian agriculture. We're reaching out to younger Canadians to be sure. A good part of our recruitment strategy is getting into the schools at the secondary level and on up, reaching out that way. We have a young producers program at the Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association.

On the indigenous side, that too has been a focus. I know that the plant in High River has certainly expended a lot of effort in that area. It has proven to be somewhat difficult for them. But certainly we've reached out to them.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: When we're talking about attracting Canadian workers, obviously we have to talk about wages. Is this the type of business that I could raise a family on?

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: The starting wage for an entry level position in a feedlot can range anywhere between \$18 and \$24 a hour depending on what you're doing. There's a reason for that too. The work is special. You're dealing with a huge investment. The owners of these operations want to train people. They make a significant investment in it. Despite that though, the fact of the matter is that it is rural Canada and there are increasingly fewer people available in rural Canada to do these jobs.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: How many of your members are unionized?

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: That I don't know.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: But you do have unionized members?

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: I can't comment on that. I could certainly find that out for you and distribute it to the chairman.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Okay, thank you.

We've heard today and from other witnesses of horrible cases of abuse. Have you heard of and seen some of this abuse in your field?

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: No.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Not at all?

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: I haven't heard of any cases.

These temporary workers who have been tapped by cattle feeders represent a significant investment. Cattle feeders are not interested in temporary workers. They've resorted to the temporary worker program as a matter of last resort. What I've heard are other stories. For example, there's Paskal Cattle Company near Lethbridge where a Mexican temporary worker was brought into the country, did very well, and received permanent residency. His family came and now this individual is actually the manager of that feedlot operation.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: This leads me to the next question. For LMIA's, do employees who receive permanent residency generally remain working within the industry in filling that labour gap, or do they move on?

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: My sense, and it's just a sense—so I can ask this question of some of our members as well—is that they do stick around because there are opportunities to move within the industry. A good example is the fellow at Paskal feeders who started in an entry-level position and is now managing a feedlot of tens of thousands of cattle, and he is very successful at it.

•(1620)

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

Mr. Sangha, please. You have six minutes.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): My question is for Mr. Pollard. I understand that you are involved in the lodging industry, hotels.

Mr. Anthony Pollard: That's correct.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: You say you have a shortage of seasonal workers during a bad season.

Is the pay that you offer them comparable with the pay that Canadians are required to have?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: Yes, it's very much so.

In fact, about three years ago in Alberta, we commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to do a summary of what the wage rates were and how they reflected minimum wages and above. Going back three years ago, through PWC, we showed that the average was about \$16.50 an hour, which would be even higher today with inflation. Yes, it's very much over and above what the minimum wage would be.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Okay.

Do you feel there is any problem in getting labour market impact assessments for your temporary foreign workers when you want to call them?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: Yes, there are problems with it. There are a whole variety of problems, everything from where to advertise, how long do you do that, to the information that you collect, and proving that we've done everything in our power. At the end of the day, you have to remember that in a hotel we need people today or tomorrow. If all of a sudden business changes and you have to ramp up, being able to say, well, six months from now we'll be able to have somebody here in most cases is just not good enough.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: What do you feel are the other impediments to getting a labour market impact assessment when you are having problems?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: One of the big problems is the lack of consistency across Canada.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Regarding what?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: When you want to go through an LMIA process, it makes no sense to me whatsoever that if we're looking for people in Atlantic Canada...and Janet Goulding will be here shortly to give you the numbers on it. It's much faster to engage somebody in one part of the country than it is in the other. That just doesn't make sense. I understand that we're five-and-a-half time zones wide but—

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: What type of suggestion would you give to make improvements on a regional basis?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: I would like to be able to see consistency right across the board. If you're looking for somebody, let's say, in Mont-Tremblant, which probably isn't a good example, because Quebec is a bit different here.

[Translation]

I come from Quebec

[English]

and I'm allowed to say that, I guess.

If you're looking for somebody, let's say, in the Muskoka area, it takes, say, six or seven months to go through the process. But if you're looking for somebody on the south shore of Nova Scotia, it's much faster. For the life of me, I don't understand why the bureaucracy takes longer in one part of the country than the other.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Do you provide your temporary foreign workers with boarding and other lodging facilities?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: We provide the lodging, again, subject to what the labour regulations are and so forth. We provide the lodging and the airfare; bring the people in, fly them in. I often get asked the question, why don't we hire more Canadians? As a businessman, if I have access to something that's going to cost me \$100 versus something that's going to cost me \$5,000, which one are you going to go with? Obviously, you're going to go with the least expensive; but when there's nobody there, and we have floors of hotels that you can't open, we need something.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Do you want your temporary foreign workers to have a permit or open type of employment restrictions for two years or one year, or should it be open for three or four years?

• (1625)

Mr. Anthony Pollard: That's an interesting question.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Which type of term would you suggest?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: I would suggest anything to make it open for a longer period.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Do you think that will help in transitioning temporary foreign workers to being permanent residents?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: Yes, it very definitely will.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Which way will?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: A longer term will. Maybe I didn't interpret your question properly.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: No, you are okay. You're telling me the correct thing. What I mean is will a longer term give more opportunity to the temporary foreign worker to integrate into Canadian society, or is a short term okay? What do you suggest?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: I think both.

I'm sorry, maybe I'm being very anal and pedantic here, but I don't understand the line of questioning.

Are you saying to integrate the people, is it better to do it over a short period or a long period?

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Do you suggest that a long period or a short period is good?

Mr. Anthony Pollard: I don't know. I think I'm answering both to the same question now. I'm sorry. I'm confused.

Are you asking whether to integrate people it is better to try to integrate them into Canada over a short period versus a long period? Is that the question?

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Yes.

Mr. Anthony Pollard: I think the shorter period would be better in being able to make them become part of Canada, but if it takes longer to do it, and they become employees, I think that's great too.

I'm sorry. I'm not trying to talk out of both sides of my mouth.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Having a short period with better integration and a better system to provide them permanent residence is better. That's good for you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Deltell, please.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mesdames, sir, welcome to the House of Commons.

My first question will be for Mr. Vander Ploeg. First of all, welcome. I liked what you said a few minutes ago about High River. As far as I'm concerned, High River is the birthplace of the Right Honourable Joe Clark. I'm here today thanks to him.

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: It's good to see you too.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I would like to talk about unemployment in Alberta. We all know that there are a lot of problems with the crisis in the oil business. We all know that Fort McMurray is up north and High River is in the south of the province. How can we explain to people that we have to hire people from outside of Canada when there are a lot of people who are losing their jobs in your own province?

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: I'm not going to diminish the optics of it, because the optics seem at first glance to be so odd. You have, in the case of Alberta, a dramatic crash in oil and gas, and that is a key part of the provincial economy, so you have a rising provincial unemployment rate. At the same time, however, there are opportunities in the province, but they simply are not near where the pool of unemployed workers is. They are in rural parts of the province. It's very much a case of finding a way to explain to Canadians that in Canada there is increasingly a divide between a pattern of increasing urbanization on the one hand and opportunities on the rural side on the other hand. The unemployment situation in urban Canada cannot be translated to what's happening in the rural parts of the province. It's as simple as that.

Maybe I didn't explain it very well, but there are basically two worlds out there in some sense.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: You can understand though that when we look at this from other parts of Canada, we're seeing people losing their jobs and we're looking for opportunities there. It's not very easy for us to explain that we have to hire people from outside when there are plenty of people who are losing their jobs.

Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg: Maybe it's a little bit simpler than that to some extent. Here I would refer more to what's going on in meat-packing facilities. It is simply work that many Canadians will not do or do not want to do. You can lead that horse to water, but I'm not strong enough to pull his neck down to make him drink. That's part of the challenge too.

To some extent, I think the Canadian economy has always had that element to it. In my personal experience, my father came here after World War II to hoe beets in a field, yet my father was an electrician in the Netherlands and he ran a crew in one of the most important coal mines in the country. He gave it all up to do this work as his way into Canada. We've had these challenges. I think there will be more and more pressure with an aging demographic too.

• (1630)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you for sharing your personal experience. I do respect that. Don't get me wrong, as I want to be very clear. You're talking about a skilled job and that people need to have some ability to do it. I could have some problems, in that all of the ridings near me are not as big as the one in High River. I have some *boucheries* in Quebec. I visit them usually, and it's not an easy task. I have a lot of respect for the people who work there. It's not for everybody; I recognize that.

Madame Paglingayen, I was very touched by your experience and thank you so much for sharing it with us. Here in the 21st century in Canada, a very generous country, a very modern country, how can we explain that we have to live like a servant?

Ms. Pinky Paglingayen: I don't even know how to say it. Before coming here, I heard that Canada was very welcoming, that worker strikes are expected, that we would have better opportunities here, but it didn't happen. We have to work our way to get permanent residency here, to be respected as a worker, and then in the end, so many of us, even for some of us who are already permanent residents, abuses at work still happen because we choose to stay in caregiving jobs.

I don't know how to explain it, even though I've been teaching the history of caregiving in Canada. They were given permanent resident status upon arrival until they changed their country of origin, and then it became temporary and a lot of things just happened. I was so amazed because regardless of where we're from, we're still human, we're still people who have these feelings of caring for other people and yet they devalue the skill we have. It's not very easy, taking care of somebody who is not related to you, and yet we are giving our energy, our emotions, to take care of these people.

Believe it or not, when I was caring for this elderly person, it was only for two months and I felt so much compassion for this person that when she passed away, nobody could talk to me because I was crying; that's how much I loved this person. I felt I was considered a family member.

Yet in my previous employment I was treated like a nobody. Can you imagine staying all hours, being awakened at two o'clock in the morning just to have your employer ask you to massage her. I don't know...I was just so scared at that time. I couldn't even call my friends to tell them what was happening to me because in front of my friends I always put on a brave front so they would not think this was happening to me at that time because they had been complaining a lot too.

It's very difficult...I don't understand, I just don't understand. The fact that most of us are professionals back home, even have a degree in physiotherapy and even went back to school here...anywhere you go it's still the same. If they saw another Filipino at the store, they would ask if we were looking for a job, a learning job. It's something that is...I don't know, that's just how they see us. It's because of the status that we have here. Even my cousin who arrived here as a professional, even a caregiver would be asked if they wanted to work for them. Yet if they knew.... I think most of us knew that the need for caregivers is not temporary, but a permanent need of Canadian families.

Yet, I don't know, I just don't know. We're treated like this and if anything has to be changed, this will give us a better or a fair chance to be treated with respect as caregivers. Because without our job as a caregiver...it's not just that we love our job, we have this skill that we can provide to families.

• (1635)

The Chair: On that very passionate note, unfortunately, I have to wrap up this hour.

Thank you all for being here today, especially you, Ms. Paglingayen.

Ms. Pinky Paglingayen: Thank you so much.

The Chair: It's our pleasure. I think I echo the sentiments of everyone here when I say I really do appreciate your courage and bravery for being here today and telling us your story.

Thank you.

Ms. Pinky Paglingayen: Thanks. You're welcome.

The Chair: To the committee, we'll be breaking very briefly to bring in the next panel. We will be suspending for no more than three or four minutes. Thank you.

•(1635) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1640)

The Chair: Could we come back together, please?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: On a point of order, Mr. Chair—and thank you for the time—I saw an article in last weekend's *Globe and Mail*, about a Ms. Teta Bayan who wasn't able to appear before us in committee. I felt compelled by her story. I would just propose out of the goodwill of this committee that we would allow her to appear in the stead of the one of the government witnesses.

The Chair: She has actually been invited back already. She is going to be appearing on Wednesday.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Okay.

The Chair: I was pretty sure. I just wanted to double-check. I really do appreciate the offer. That's great.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: That's perfect. Thank you.

The Chair: I would like to introduce our new panel. We have with us, by video conference, from the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, Vincent Wong.

Welcome.

Mr. Vincent Wong (Staff Lawyer, Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic): Thanks for that.

The Chair: We have from Maple Leaf Foods Inc. Rory McAlpine, here in studio, so to speak. Welcome, sir.

Hopefully soon we will have Hubert Bolduc and Martin Goulet from Montréal International.

For the sake of time, we're going to start with the presentations; hopefully we'll see Montreal back on the screen shortly.

I think first we're going to go to Mr. McAlpine from Maple Leaf Foods.

If you would, please share your opening statement of seven minutes.

Mr. Rory McAlpine (Senior Vice-President, Government and Industry Relations, Maple Leaf Foods Inc.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[*Translation*]

My thanks to the committee for inviting me to appear today.

[*English*]

I've shared with you a presentation document that I hope you've had a chance to look at. I'm not going to go through it, but I want to start first with talking about two people.

The first person I want to mention is Elsy Barahona. She's from El Salvador. She started at the Maple Leaf Foods plant in Brandon, Manitoba in November 2005 and she was approved under the provincial nomination program in September 2006. She obtained her permanent residency in April 2008.

She came from El Salvador and progressed from being a meat cutter. She is now a production supervisor. She's still working at the plant and she is raising a family in Brandon. In fact, she has been so

successful that we took her back to El Salvador on a recruitment trip in 2012.

Another wonderful individual whom I spoke to a couple of days ago is Liliam Acosta from Honduras. She was hired in December 2012. She received her provincial nomination in Manitoba in 2013 and her permanent residency in 2015. She too was hired as a meat cutter at our Brandon pork plant. She's now an administrator in our international recruitment office.

The best part I like in this story is that she just married a former Ukrainian temporary foreign worker. If that's not building diversity, I'm not sure what is. Later this year she will take her new husband to meet her family in El Salvador, and then early next year she will go to Ukraine to meet his family. When I asked her what I should say to the committee, her response was, tell them I'm so grateful.

I believe there are hundreds of stories such as these in our production floors at our plants in western Canada. The point is that Maple Leaf Foods is investing in nation building, not through just the expenditures to build physical capital, but also those to build human capital. When you add that to what we're trying to do in improving our impact upon natural capital, I think you've achieved the essence of sustainability.

In fact, since we began using the temporary foreign worker program in 2002, we have hired 2,487 temporary foreign workers, and 80% of those individuals are now permanent residents of Canada. We bring in foreign workers to our company to be part of this investment in Canada and we actively support their settlement and nurture their attachment to Canada.

Finally, we support them so that they can in turn become part of building the future for the company, their new community, and the country.

I will simply mention some of the issues we face in the program's design, then will mention the program administration, and finally will say a couple of words about where I see the opportunity for Canada in the future.

In terms of the design of the program, recognizing that labour shortages exist across all skill levels, we need to treat skilled, semi-skilled, and low-skilled workers the same, ending the arbitrary wage thresholds, discriminatory NOC classifications, and the biased definitions of what we consider to be a good economic immigrant.

The one year maximum for duration of stay should be increased to at least two years.

Remove the “four in” and “four out” cumulative maximum duration and allow open work permits for spouses.

Third, we recommend that a successfully established low-skilled worker should be given the opportunity to apply for permanent residency on a fast-track basis, for example, by express entry. As with refugees, why not tie the CLB for language requirements to citizenship, not to permanent residency, which is a major hurdle for these individuals.

Finally, while it's not particularly the issue for Maple Leaf, given that we have completed our major recruitments and expansion, particularly in Brandon, we think it would be appropriate to adjust the 30%, 20%, and 10% declining maximum caps, particularly in rural areas where there is a demonstrable and sustained shortage of workers or when the company is expanding its capacity and creating incremental positions. Ideally, let's ease the \$1,000 per position LMIA fee and institute an LMIA appeal mechanism so that there is an opportunity to challenge unfavourable decisions.

● (1645)

Program administration is an issue of coordinating between government agencies and the embassies abroad. ESDC and IRCC should play a more active role in coordinating between employers, foreign governments, and Canadian embassies to identify credible recruiters and facilitate the selection of reliable workers. There should be greater consistency in the administration of the program across provinces.

We would suggest, particularly for the agrifood industry, that we create a special office for the industry to ensure that the staff are knowledgeable, that they can manage timely LMIA processing, which, as previous witnesses have said, is a major issue, and ensure consistent treatment of applications.

We would suggest, based on one master approval, that ESDC should allow foreign workers to move between a company's plants to accommodate seasonal changes in production, challenges with respect to contract negotiations, and so on.

Finally, be very, very tough on program abuse but support the efforts of trusted, especially unionized, employers with a good track record. I would particularly urge you to consider carefully the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council's workforce action plan, and I know they will be a witness at the committee later this week.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I think the point is that there is a big opportunity for our country. Modernize Canadian labour and workforce development policies that better match and move Canadians to jobs, and modernizing immigration policies that award permanency to skilled and unskilled newcomers can help mitigate rural depopulation, restore viability to rural communities, and restore the growth and competitiveness of many rural businesses, including livestock production and meat manufacturing, and it can move us away from reliance on the temporary foreign worker program.

In conclusion, I want to read a one-sentence statement that actually comes from a memorandum of understanding that was signed between UFCW Canada, Cargill Ltd., Olymel, HyLife Foods, and Maple Leaf Foods at the time the last round of program changes were being introduced by the previous government in May 2014.

The statement is simply this:

The temporary foreign worker program has never been a coherent, strategic, or reasonable alternative to what the Canadian economy requires, an immigration regime allowing individuals with a variety of skill sets to become permanent residents and eventually citizens of Canada.

Thank you.

● (1650)

The Chair: We go over to Mr. Wong from the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic.

Welcome, Mr. Wong. You have seven minutes for your opening remarks, please.

Mr. Vincent Wong: I thank the chair and the committee members for giving me an opportunity to speak here with you today.

My name is Vincent Wong. I'm a staff lawyer at the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic. We're a not-for profit community legal clinic that serves low income, non-English speaking members of the Chinese and Southeast Asian community in the GTA.

Many of our clients are temporary foreign workers, many of them are in occupations that are considered low-skilled, and all these clients have language barriers to understanding and enforcing their rights. We want to make sure that these workers have their voices heard here today.

Before I go into specific recommendations I want to take a step back and look at what's happening with our temporary foreign workers program on a macro level.

Canada is and historically always has been a nation of immigrants. In recent years the government has created through its immigration policies soaring numbers of temporary residents. For example, between 1995 and 2014 we have seen an increase of 277% in temporary foreign workers, a 303% increase in international students, and a 335% increase in international mobility program participants. If we sum up these categories, that's almost a million temporary residents, not including visitors, in 2014.

Yet at the same time that these temporary resident numbers are soaring, we have not seen corresponding increases in permanent resident approvals. Over the same period of time there was only a 22% increase in permanent resident approvals, which were at 260,000 a year in 2014.

What these numbers suggest is that Canada is moving away from a permanent residency model of immigration and increasingly relying on temporary foreign labour without allowing for corresponding permanent status for newcomers.

Now, systemic abuse and exploitation among temporary foreign workers—and I don't say that all employers are engaged in it, but it is a systemic problem, and it is well documented.... We support the other groups who have come before this committee, particularly those with lived experience, to highlight some of these tough issues.

In the end, the reason there continues to be exploitation is power imbalances that arise from precarious temporary employment status. These problems cannot be resolved in the long run without resolving the underlying cause.

The government can do things to mitigate some of the worst of these abuses, but a shift back towards a permanent residency model of immigration to respond to labour market demands is in our opinion the only way to resolve the problems in the long run. To that extent I agree with Mr. McAlpine.

We therefore have six recommendations for the committee.

The first is a shift from a complaint-driven model of program enforcement to a more proactive enforcement model. Canada is already doing things to shift in that direction, but the biggest reason, aside from the fear of firing and deportation, that this is necessary is that limited time durations for work permits make a complaints process completely ineffective.

For example, a foreign worker may have their visa expire well before any employment complaint goes through due process and is adjudicated upon, and certainly well before any collection happens. Employers know this and therefore know that they can wait it out.

The second recommendation is with respect to easing work permit restrictions, particularly those that tie an employee to one job or one specific employer. Again, the problem is that if an unscrupulous employer knows that the workers can be deported if laid off and that they are not allowed to find another job, they can use that leverage to violate employment health and safety laws with impunity.

We therefore recommend that either open work permits be issued or, in the alternative, that an occupational or sectoral work permit be issued to ease some of this potential for exploitation.

The third recommendation is to eliminate the “four in-four out” rule and to institute a regularization provision for the temporary foreign workers who have found themselves out of status solely because of the execution of that rule.

• (1655)

The fourth recommendation we have is to expand settlement and health services to migrant workers. As one of the most marginalized and exploited groups in our population, temporary foreign workers must be given access to crucial settlement services for newcomers, including language services and health services, in order to meaningfully realize and enforce their rights.

The fifth and probably the most important recommendation is to institute pathways for permanent residency for all those skilled migrant workers. There is of course already a precedent for this, which is the caregiver program, the only NOC skill level C or D occupation that currently has a pathway to permanent residency.

If Canada recognizes that the work of caregivers is important to society and therefore deserving of status, why do we shut out the other workers—the food workers, the janitors, the clerks, the farm workers? Are we saying that these workers are not deserving of the same type of respect?

We therefore recommend that even low-skilled workers have meaningful avenues to permanent residency.

The final recommendation we have is for the international mobility program, which is to ensure viable pathways for permanent residency for people on post-graduate work permits. The current express entry system, unfortunately, bars the vast majority of PGWP

holders from immigrating to Canada, because they have to compete in the same pool as other express entry applicants.

Just to experiment, I crunched the numbers for my own self. The most recent score was 484 for the last express entry draw, and I determined that somebody in my position—of my age, having two degrees from U of T including a law degree, having presumably the highest maximum scores in English, and two years of relevant work experience—would still be deported after my work permit expired.

I'm not tooting my own horn, but if somebody in my position were deported because they couldn't meet the score, I imagine that Canada is losing an incredible amount of young talent, people who would be the best suited to settle in Canada and make contributions to economic, cultural, and social life. It just doesn't make sense from a national point of view, wherever you are on the political spectrum, to let these people go.

I will conclude with that.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wong.

I understand that Montreal is back on video conference. Welcome back.

We have, from Montreal International, Hubert Bolduc and Martin Goulet. Welcome.

Can you hear me?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Bolduc, can you hear us?

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll just be one moment while we try to connect with Montreal.

While we're waiting here—

Yes?

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Chair, just in the interest of time, while they're getting hooked up, why don't we ask questions?

The Chair: It's going to be a few minutes.

Actually, it depends on whether they might want to put the question to them. We could go to Monsieur Deltell, but is your question...?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I want to ask questions of the people in Montreal, but we can agree to make your point and I will make mine.

The Chair: Do you want to switch, then? Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I open the door to that.

Mr. Wayne Long: Well, my questions were for Mr. McAlpine.

The Chair: Okay, Ms. Tassi would be the next on the list, unless your questions were—

They are for Mr. Wong? Okay.

Thank you, everybody, for the cooperation.

Ms. Tassi, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Witnesses, thanks for your presence here today, via skype or being physically present.

My question is for you, Mr. Wong. I understand that you're talking about the problem here really being a systemic problem and about permanent residency being the solution. We've heard this from various witnesses, but I'd like to focus on the abuses that are occurring and get your input on those.

The changes to the temporary foreign worker program in June 2014 introduced changes for monitoring and enforcement mechanisms available to Employment and Social Development Canada. The proposed changes introduced increased inspections using a tip line reporting system. I'd like your opinion on how effective those changes have been in ensuring employer compliance.

Mr. Vincent Wong: I think the tip line system is part of the tool box that we can use, but, of course, at the end of the day it is of little benefit for the actual migrant worker. Let's say if you're a migrant worker and you're being abused or your employer is not doing something right, you call this tip line. Okay. Presumably, some sort of inspection might happen or some follow-up will happen, so the employer will know or guess that somebody has been tipped off.

Often, what we see happen is that the employer will look around or think about ways to make sure there's silence on this. Of course, I'm not saying that all employers do this, just some unscrupulous employers whom we've seen at our clinic.

The tip line is not the same as, say, a provincial standards complaint. Let's say if I am not paid overtime or am owed unpaid wages, I can make a claim to the provincial ministry of labour and they'll follow through and, hopefully, I'll get what I'm due under the Employment Standards Act from that. But the tip line doesn't have that mechanism, obviously, so it puts employees as a group at risk. There's no benefit other than to make sure, from the government's point of view, that the employers are systemically aligning with that program. I would say that it's part of the tool box, but it's not perfect. It has to go with other things.

• (1705)

Ms. Filomena Tassi: With respect to other abuses, with the standards that are in place now, we've heard from witnesses that there's fear about making reports. Can you comment on how effective the current resources are and how they can be improved with respect to all abuses?

Mr. Vincent Wong: We're doing a lot of good things. I think we've identified the problem and we're trying to figure out what's the best model to address some of those problems.

I would say that because of the particularly marginalized position that a lot of these migrant workers come to vis-à-vis the employer, but also vis-à-vis the government, they're just really scared all the time that they're going to get deported. If you open up, let's say, settlement agencies or community agencies that can be trusted intermediaries, then they can handle some of these complaints and inform the migrant worker of their rights, as well as of the

procedures. I think that would go a long way from society's point of view to addressing some of these problems.

First, we have to untie settlement agency funding from permanent residency only, which is the way the funding mechanisms work currently.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: In your opening remarks you spoke about the timeline and how that's frustrating and that what happens is that the complaint is never able to be resolved and the employers know that.

Can you give me an estimate as to what the timeline is when complaints are being pursued?

Mr. Vincent Wong: Of course, it depends on what sort of complaint it is. There are some occupational health and safety complaints, housing complaints, and employment standards. I do employment standards mostly, so I'm most familiar with those.

I would say that the average case, at the fastest, takes from six months to, at the most, five to six years.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: It takes six years before the complaint is addressed. Wow!

Mr. Vincent Wong: Yes, before some resolution happens.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: My final question is about what you said about not tying work permits tied to a specific employer but rather the workforce itself. Can you elaborate on that and how you would find that helpful?

Mr. Vincent Wong: What we're seeing now is that when a work permit is specifically tied to, let's say, a particular job at employer X—again, this is not the case with all employers—it creates a situation where the employer knows that whatever happens, if this person is no longer working at this job, they've violated the work permit and the employer can call CIC and get this person deported. That's the problem—and that's no matter what happens. Let's say I'm the employer and I'm paying these people \$5 an hour cash under the table and I'm not doing their EI, I'm not doing anything. If somebody speaks out about it, it's see you later.

So where's this person going to go? We know that the employer has violated the TFWP provisions, but who's going to say anything about it? And especially if this person doesn't speak English well, where are they going to get the resources to do that? That's the kind of difficulty we're struggling with.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Thank you.

The Chair: We still don't have Montreal International back, but we're going to try to get them on the screen.

Mr. Deltell, would you like to continue with someone else, or will you keep your time for them as well?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I'll keep my time for them.

The Chair: Ms. Ashton, would you like to ask questions of either Mr. Wong or Mr. McAlpine? I apologize for this, but there's not much we can do.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): It's an odd situation to be in. I'm fine ask my questions of the witnesses who are able to join us.

Perhaps we can deal with the other presentation.

The Chair: We'll try to get Montreal back on the line. If you wish to continue, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I'll begin with you, Mr. McAlpine.

We're hearing from many witnesses, including employers, that creating a clear path to immigration is something that is seen as very important in reforming the programs that exist right now. Do you believe this would create a more stable environment for workers—obviously not just in your industry—and also create stability for businesses and encourage worker retention in the industry you're in?

Could you speak to that with a particular focus on retention?

• (1710)

Mr. Rory McAlpine: Very definitely, as I think others have mentioned, agriculture is not an easy occupation. Meat cutting is certainly not easy, and retention is a major challenge in the industry; it always has been.

What we've found in our successful use of the program and the transition to permanent residency for foreign workers is that retention is much better than it has ever been before in our business, in our plants. Once workers obtain their permanent residency, they can certainly then move and work for anyone, but they are very loyal and they know that a lot has been invested in them. They become pretty quickly part of the community because of the outreach we're making to the community, to our partners with the help of the union, to ensure that their settlement is successful. In that sense it's a win for the workers.

In that's sense, it's a win for the workers and it's win for us as an employer, because, as I say, of the loyalty, the hard work, and the retention that we enjoy—and for the community. In these cases, smaller rural western Canadian towns that are often suffering depopulation can actually see it reversed. That's exactly what has happened in Brandon, Manitoba.

Overall it has been a very positive experience and one that is facilitated by permanency as distinct from thinking of these individuals as temporary.

Ms. Niki Ashton: My next question I will direct to you, Mr. Wong.

One of the discussions we've also had, albeit brief in the context of this study, concerns the lack of inspections. For example, between 2013 and 2015 there have only been eight on-site inspections. This is despite the harrowing tales we've heard of abuse and exploitation that have taken place in a number of workplaces, sadly. Could you share your thoughts on the deficiencies on that front? While we're all talking about access to citizenship and certainly policy-driven pieces, the reality is that the inspections are not taking place.

I'm wondering whether you could speak to that.

Mr. Vincent Wong: I'm aware of some of the inspection deficiencies that have been brought forth on the record by previous witnesses. Obviously, that is a major concern—again, going back to first principles—because of the significant power imbalances between temporary foreign workers who do not have permanent status and their employers.

Part of this is obviously a government resource problem. I'm encouraged with the direction of some of the reforms, such as providing more funding to some of these inspectors. Again, I will say that some of this is going to be inherent, if they're on temporary status in the first place.

The other thing that compounds this problem is that if you have them in isolated places—such as, for example, on farms, where it's very difficult to do an inspection, to actually go all the way out—it's very costly to do.

We might want to think about this whole thing. Instead of putting really big bandages on the symptoms, we might think of a better way to provide permanent status more quickly to people who need it and to provide ongoing settlement services so that they can fix these problems themselves; they'd have the collective bargaining ability to advocate for their own employment rights.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Just quickly, and obviously you've spoken to this as well, but some experts have said that a cap on who can apply for permanent residency is an issue. I'm wondering if you can speak to the notion of these caps, or the fact that they exist. Are they linked to the kind of exploitation that workers face?

• (1715)

The Chair: You have about one minute, please. Thank you.

Mr. Vincent Wong: I'll quickly address that.

Yes, I do think that the caps on permanent residency for those programs do contribute, because if this is the whole pie, let's say 5% can apply for PR, what happens to the 95%? They're stuck in temporary status limbo. These are all created by us as a society, as a government, when we allow a huge number of people to stay in temporary, precarious status. We don't give them access to health care, to social services, and then we're surprised by the harrowing stories we hear. That's going to be a problem and if we're going to rely on this temporary foreign worker system, we have to make it a full-on permanent nation-building project.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would like to introduce Hubert Bolduc and Martin Goulet from Montréal International.

Please, gentlemen, seven minutes for your introduction. Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Hubert Bolduc (Chief Executive Officer, Montreal International): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, I would first like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to appear as part of this consultation.

The temporary foreign worker program is an essential tool for the economy of greater Montreal. Montreal International acts as an economic driver for greater Montreal to attract foreign wealth while accelerating the success of its partners and clients. We attract foreign companies, international organizations and strategic talent to the greater Montreal area.

Greater Montreal is not the only metropolitan region that can count on this type of organization. Most big cities in the world have those types of agencies. Actually, 4,000 foreign direct investment and talent attraction companies are competing around the world. By comparison, there were only 800 companies 20 years ago. They are essential for competitiveness, growth, wealth and, of course, the future of the cities they represent.

Since its inception, Montreal International has helped to welcome and retain 10,000 international strategic talents and has attracted foreign direct investment to the tune of \$10 billion in greater Montreal. Those projects have led to the creation and maintenance of 52,000 jobs and the establishment of almost half of the 60 or so international organizations in the city.

Immigration is inevitably part of the equation when we meet with foreign investors. That is the first factor in attracting foreign investment. We are asked on a regular basis whether Montreal has a pool of strategic and skilled talent available and whether it is large enough. If that is not the case, is it possible to recruit strategic workers abroad and can they get a job quickly?

The presence of strategic talent is at the core of the concerns of business people and potential investors. That asset is even more key than the sectors that drive job creation in greater Montreal: higher learning sectors that depend mainly on the skills of the labour force.

The brief that we have presented and are presenting is built on three major principles. Our immigration system must be able to make decisions quickly. It must be easily understandable for our companies and must be predictable, which means avoiding the arbitrary and numerous annual changes.

Immigration must not put a damper on economic growth and our capacity to attract foreign investment. On the contrary, we must set ourselves apart from other areas that are also looking for strategic talent and equip ourselves with the means to realize our ambitions. It is also important to make a distinction between temporary foreign workers who are skilled and those who are not. In the past, the two categories were wrongly treated equally.

Since greater Montreal is rooted in the knowledge economy, its economic development must go through the development of its high-tech sectors. The companies operating in those sectors often call on specialized temporary foreign workers to make up for local and regional labour market shortages. Let's think specifically of the following sectors: information technology, video games and visual effects, software development, consulting services, financial services, and so on. Those sectors have seen a growth rate of up to 25% a year.

Montreal International supports a number of those companies in their recruitment efforts abroad. Most of the applications with which Montreal International is involved are made through the simplified application process for the labour market impact assessments for

Quebec employers. This process makes the requirements easier for a list of professions that are in shortage or in high demand, as established by Emploi-Québec. To date, this program has turned out to be effective and has made it possible to reduce the companies' hiring delays, especially in the city's leading-edge sectors.

We strongly encourage you to keep this simplified process for Quebec and to use it as a model for the rest of Canada. It gives a very competitive advantage to attract foreign investment in greater Montreal and elsewhere in Quebec. Employers recruiting from abroad have urgent needs and we must try at all costs to simplify and speed up the process. That is especially important since strategic sectors such as visual effects and video games are those with very tight project deadlines, which can lead to the loss of contracts if they are not met.

The recent changes made by the Government of Canada to the foreign worker program have caused a lot of uncertainty and pressure on employers. On the ground, we feel that they are burned out and they say they are misunderstood by the authorities.

In Quebec, immigration is a shared jurisdiction. We have already communicated to the Government of Quebec our thoughts on the temporary foreign worker program and we have prepared a list of priority recommendations. They are included at the end of our brief. They must be considered and implemented quickly.

As I mentioned in the introduction, our immigration system must be fast, predictable and easily understood. It is important for the two governments to work hand in hand. That will allow us to increase the pace of development of the leading-edge sectors of our overall economy. Our recommendations are mainly on those points: shorten the delays in the foreign worker program, eliminate the requirement for the transition plan for professions that have a shortage, eliminate the administrative burden of the program—whether in terms of the consistency of decisions or the assessment of applications—and clarify the new concept of employer compliance, which comes with heavy sanctions.

● (1720)

This consultation must also be conducted in partnership with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, which is responsible for the international mobility program and, ultimately, for the issuing of work permits with the Canada Border Services Agency. We have also made recommendations to them.

Montreal International is particularly aware of the value of the contribution of immigration to the economic development of greater Montreal and the importance of working to give Montreal its rightful place in attracting strategic talent from all over the world.

You can rest assured of our willingness to continue to actively cooperate with all authorities who seek our participation in the discussions and the actions affecting greater Montreal's economic development future.

Thank you very much for your attention.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to go back to Monsieur Deltell, please, for six minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you very much, Mr. Bolduc and Mr. Goulet. I am very happy to greet you.

Mr. Chair, let me specifically greet Mr. Bolduc with whom I had the pleasure of working in the past. In another life, Mr. Bolduc was the Quebec premier's spokesperson. He was also the secretary general for government communications at the ministère du Conseil exécutif. Hubert, I am happy to see you again.

Now, let's get back to the decorum.

Mr. Bolduc, first of all, I would like you to tell me about the simplified process in Quebec. What distinguishes the simplified process in Quebec from the current process? I know that you have talked about it and that it is mentioned in your document. Could you briefly tell us which aspects of the current federal legislation and regulations need to be improved as soon as possible?

Mr. Martin Goulet (Director, International Mobility Services, Montreal International): A simplified process was put in place in Quebec almost three years ago. It is an agreement between Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Emploi-Québec and Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions. This agreement makes it possible to make a list of the jobs that are in high demand or in shortage. When a job is on that list, we can obtain a labour market impact assessment much faster, within four to five weeks, and apply through the simplified process. That makes it possible to eliminate the requirement for employers to show a pile of evidence indicating that they made efforts locally, since we know that there is definitely a shortage in that profession.

Naturally, as Mr. Bolduc mentioned earlier, the list is established for the province. We encourage you to perhaps use it as a model for the rest of Canada. I know that people have come to see you and proposed that you eliminate the LMIA, the Labour Market Impact Assessments, for some leading-edge sectors or some high-demand professions. We have also told you that there may be a way to regionalize those simplified process lists.

Would you like to say something, Mr. Deltell?

• (1725)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: You can continue with your answer, Mr. Goulet.

Mr. Martin Goulet: I would like to mention that, if a profession is not on that list, the process is much longer. The employer will have to wait more than three months before receiving an answer.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: We have talked with representatives from the video games industry. They said—and you talked about it before—that sometimes a project for which they wanted to hire a person would end within 18 months to two years.

In your view, from beginning to end, what would be the ideal timeline for the entire operation of selecting someone for a job and bringing them to live and work in Canada?

Mr. Martin Goulet: In some industries, the projects only last six months. Waiting for three months just to receive a positive decision to allow us to bring people to Canada is not worth it. In an ideal world, decisions should be made in about 10 days or less than two weeks. That would be wonderful.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: It would be wonderful, but is it feasible? Has it happened before?

Mr. Martin Goulet: Yes.

We have had that sort of result in the past, especially on Canada's west coast. If an employer had previously obtained a positive LMIA, it was possible for decisions to be made faster with a second or third application. The previous government had included in the Putting Canadians First reform the possibility of obtaining LMIAs within 10 days.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: There were stricter regulations about two years ago because, unfortunately, abuses had been noticed by seasonal employers out west, among other places. I know that's not your area at all, but it is technically the same thing since they are foreign workers who come here for a certain period of time. We understand that these are two completely different things, especially in terms of wages, but that's what brought this situation about.

You are talking about technology, video games and the financial world. In your field, have you experienced this sort of situation where people, after they came here, did something other than what they were hired for?

Mr. Martin Goulet: You are right to point it out.

We must make a distinction between specialized or strategic workers and those who are not specialized.

Under the current compliance regime, a solution that was put in place after the observed abuses ensures that employers honour the commitments they make in their application and their obligations for the benefits and wages agreed on.

The problem facing leading-edge companies today is this. They hire a programmer at \$80,000 CDN and the compliance regime requires them to inform Service Canada of a wage increase of over 2%, even if it is on an annual basis. We try to supplement the wages of those workers because they are working in leading-edge sectors. Sometimes, it may take two to three months to be able to supplement the salary because we are waiting for an answer from the government. We have had more experience with the reverse situation.

[English]

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Okay.

[Translation]

Friends, here is my last question.

You talked about technology, video games and the financial world. My question may be peculiar, especially given the issues we have experienced.

Those people are used to working in high-tech. Could you have those people work from abroad or do they absolutely have to be in Canada?

Mr. Martin Goulet: In practical terms, the employers want those workers to be in their company. They need to develop and design projects that are confidential. For all the reasons that you may imagine, very few of them are working outside Canada.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Anyway, it is much more cost-effective for those people to live here instead of working through a camera.

• (1730)

Mr. Martin Goulet: Absolutely.

[English]

The Chair: We'll go over very quickly to Monsieur Robillard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): My question is for either of the witnesses.

Quebec is one of—

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa: I have a point of order.

The Chair: He's only going to get a couple of minutes, if that's your point of order.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Yes, Chair, I'm speaking to the point of order.

It's 5:30, and we now are supposed to be ending and going into the next phase.

The Chair: That is understood.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Each party has had a chance to speak and ask questions, so I think it's important that we stick with the clock and get on to the next group.

The Chair: That's fair enough. I was going to give Monsieur Robillard an opportunity for just one question.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Fine. Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Quebec is one of the four provinces hiring the most workers in high-paying positions under the temporary foreign worker program.

Since you are promoting greater Montreal, you know that the city is key for the digital sector.

Based on what you have been able to observe in terms of the hiring of temporary foreign workers, is there a solution to meet the gaps in training or mobility for Canadian workers?

Mr. Martin Goulet: The temporary foreign worker program is one of the solutions that can be used to meet the labour needs. That is what our brief actually says. Naturally, the training needs to be matched with the job and the graduation rates need to increase. There is also the permanent residence solution, which makes it possible to attract immigrants and therefore create a pool of skilled workers.

We must understand that the temporary foreign worker program is a solution for a specific and temporary need. It is a solution to a

shortage. A profession can be in high demand. Is the idea to fill a position for two years, three years or three months? It's really a temporary solution.

A voice: That makes it possible to hire experienced people.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank all of the panellists—

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

I haven't had a chance to ask a question.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we are out of time.

I also apologize to Mr. McAlpine for not getting any questions, but I will say that your presentation was quite complete.

If there are any questions to any of the witnesses from any of the members of this committee, if they would like to get them to the clerk, we can get them passed on and of course will pass the responses back to everybody.

Again, thank you very much.

We're moving to our third panel very quickly. I see that they have just arrived. I would like to thank everybody and apologize for the technical delays with Montreal. We're very glad to have heard from all of you as well.

Thank you so much.

We will be suspending for about two minutes just to get organized here.

• (1730)

(Pause)

• (1735)

The Chair: Let us come to order, please.

Welcome back.

From the Department of Employment and Social Development, we are joined by Paul Thompson, senior assistant deputy minister, skills and employment branch; Janet Goulding, director general, temporary foreign worker program, skills and employment branch; as well as, from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Maia Welbourne, director general, immigration branch; and Robert Judge, director of temporary resident policy and program division, immigration branch, strategic and program policy.

That is a quite a business card. I think I said that last time, too.

Thank you again for very graciously coming back. I know we were cut off early. We heard opening statements from you during the previous opportunity. We're going to jump right into questions, if that is okay.

First up is Mark Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you to the departmental officials for being with us today.

My understanding is that right now the processing time for permanent residency status applications in Canada is quite a bit longer than the time for somebody coming in to be a temporary foreign worker to go through that process.

Is this a correct understanding, that it takes substantially longer for permanent resident status?

Mr. Paul Thompson (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): I can speak to the labour market impact assessment portion. There's more to getting the permanent residency than just that part of the process.

Each of our different streams for processing our LMIA's has a different timeline associated with it; some are faster, some are slower. In 2015, the data I have says that it took about 56 days on average in processing time for a labour market impact assessment for someone seeking permanent residency.

Mr. Mark Warawa: So it takes 56 days for the LMIA; then, after that, the processing time to approve a temporary foreign worker is what?

Mr. Paul Thompson: That wouldn't be in the temporary foreign worker stream. It would be in support of an individual, who could be a temporary foreign worker, seeking permanent residency through a —

Mr. Mark Warawa: Could anybody answer that presently?

Mr. Paul Thompson: You could speak to the express entry—

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you.

Ms. Maia Welbourne (Director General, Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Processing times under our permanent residence streams vary, but for those applications being managed through the express entry system the processing standard is six months, and that is from the moment when an individual is invited to apply for permanent residence. That processing standard is being met.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Then it's six months for somebody for permanent residence.

Why would it be so much longer—and I think we all know the answer—to have somebody apply for permanent resident status, as compared with a temporary foreign worker?

• (1740)

Ms. Maia Welbourne: It's a complicated answer. There are a number of factors at play. One has been that generally, as you may know, under our annual levels plan there is every year a limited number of spaces, and there is traditionally more interest in coming to Canada as a permanent resident than spaces available. This has meant that people who had to apply often waited some time before their applications were reviewed.

Under the express entry system, as I say, we are within a six-month standard, which is much more efficient than it has ever been before, really. There are a number of factors that need to be assessed by officers when they are assessing a permanent resident application, not just eligibility for programs.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'm sorry for interrupting, but that's my understanding, too: that there are many more factors for permanent residency than for temporary foreign workers.

Is that correct? I think you just said that.

Ms. Maia Welbourne: Under the permanent resident streams, and there are different permanent resident programs, there are significant factors that have to be assessed, both eligibility for the program as well as admissibility, health, safety, and security aspects.

Mr. Mark Warawa: —and qualifications, which takes time. Okay.

What I think we've heard through this process and we're now seeing is the government heading in the direction of announcing changes to the temporary foreign worker program, including changing.... As I think Ms. Tassi said, permanent resident status is a solution, and as we've heard from a number of witnesses, permanent residency is what they're asking for.

If somebody, then, were applying for a temporary foreign worker permit and had gone through an LMIA, and if the government made an announcement that this were to change such that when somebody applied to be a temporary foreign worker they'd get permanent residency—and that's what we've heard announced and questioned—will that slow down the process, making it take longer to become a permanent resident, or do you see that it could be done efficiently and just as quickly to get permanent residency? Is it possible to have the proper screening, all these different aspects of screening? Can we do it properly in the same kind of short time frame that we now use for temporary foreign workers?

Ms. Maia Welbourne: Just to speak on the permanent resident side, which is differently managed and has a different context from entries on the temporary side, to begin with we have a managed approach to permanent resident migration, which means that we have a levels plan every year that sets out the number of permanent residents we're going to admit to the country.

On the temporary side, it's a demand-driven program, so we're responding to incoming requests. On the permanent side, we establish at the outset how many individuals in different classes—economic, family, and protected people—and then within programs.

How quickly you are processed depends on a multitude of factors, including how many people are already in the system being processed under those streams, what the targets are, and various other factors.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Unfortunately, the question wasn't answered.

Thank you.

The Chair: We go over to Mr. Long, please.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to everyone for coming back.

This question is for Mr. Thompson. Since changes were introduced in 2010, and then in 2014, to increase the compliance framework, do you believe there's been an increase in compliance?

Mr. Paul Thompson: The increased compliance rate is certainly the objective, and there's been a significant increase in efforts on many fronts in terms of our two main fronts. In one, increasing our capacity to do inspections and investigations, there's been considerable ramp-up of activity, as well as penalties that were put in place, which now are up to \$100,000 per violation and up to \$1 million per employer.

It takes a longer term to assess the degree of compliance on the ground, but we're confident that, with that degree of inspection activity and those penalties, we will be seeing significant improvement.

• (1745)

Mr. Wayne Long: Would you say, then, that the new system is effective and efficient?

Mr. Paul Thompson: There's considerable effort being put into improving the compliance in the program. Insofar as compliance is an objective, there's lots of emphasis being put on it, I guess I would say, in terms of the resourcing and the penalties that are in place.

Mr. Wayne Long: Here is the next question. In your opinion, is the ESDC tip line portal for reporting employer non-compliance sufficiently accessible for temporary workers themselves?

Mr. Paul Thompson: The tip line is getting a fair bit of activity. We've had more than 3,800 tips received since it was set up, so there's a fair bit of input there.

Mr. Wayne Long: Over what time frame was that?

Mr. Paul Thompson: That's since April 2014.

Mr. Wayne Long: There were 3,800 tips.

Mr. Paul Thompson: Yes, and those are sorted through. Some are very serious allegations and are, of course, referred to other law enforcement authorities, and many of them result in investigations by our own staff on employer non-compliance.

Mr. Wayne Long: What sorts of barriers do you foresee for temporary foreign workers to actually using the line?

Mr. Paul Thompson: Awareness of the line would be one area. We should be always making sure that we're promoting awareness about the line.

Mr. Wayne Long: I'll just jump. What are you currently doing to do that?

Mr. Paul Thompson: One area that's particularly knowledgeable about it would be the seasonal agriculture worker program, in which there's a greater opportunity to brief workers who are coming in, because it's managed in conjunction with the consulates from the participating countries. There's a full briefing on worker rights, including access to the tip line. That's an area where there's probably more awareness.

There also are some brochures that we've made available to all incoming temporary foreign workers, in five or six different languages, so that the workers are aware of their rights. I believe the tip line is included in the materials.

Mr. Wayne Long: My last question is, what might some of the consequences be of workers failing to be able to initiate an inspection of non-compliance?

Mr. Paul Thompson: Do you mean inspection of non-compliance by the employer?

Mr. Wayne Long: Yes.

Mr. Paul Thompson: The penalties that came into effect in the fall of last year, in December, for any offences committed after that date, are as I mentioned \$100,000 per violation and up to \$1 million plus a ban for up to a lifetime from use of the program, so there are pretty significant penalties for non-compliance.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll be sharing my time with MP Tassi.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Tassi.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Before I begin I'd like to make a point of clarification.

MP Warawa has suggested that I was the one who said that permanent residence was a solution. In fact, when I said that, I was quoting from Mr. Wong's opening statement, which was corroborated by Professor Liew's comment. Just to be clear, those were comments I was making about the witnesses, not expressions of my own personal opinion.

Mr. Thompson may be the best one to ask this question to. We're hearing from some industries that have been using TFWs that they have tried everything and still can't find Canadian workers.

Do you believe this to be the case, and if you do, then what is the solution for these industries in finding employees to meet their needs?

Mr. Paul Thompson: There's a lot of opportunity to use the programming in place in the department and programming in provinces and territories to help find suitable Canadians. There are some partners who are doing significant work in this area, and some of our programs are active in this area.

Our youth employment strategy, for example, is finding youth at risk and using Canada Summer Jobs programming to help meet some of the needs.

Also, we're looking at using our labour market development agreements. These are the \$2 billion—and growing to \$2.5 billion—transfers to provinces under the EI program. Provinces are making increased use of these to meet some of the needs where there are shortages.

There are various program instruments that can be used to help meet these needs, and then the TFW program is intended, at the end of the day, as a last resort, if none of these programs is successful in attracting Canadians.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: You think, then, that there are enough programs, that they have the resources, and that once those are exhausted the temporary foreign workers program is the solution.

Mr. Paul Thompson: We require them to make some... For example, an employer must reach out to some under-represented groups before we will actually process their labour market impact assessment. In many cases this results in outreach to some of our indigenous training organizations, for example. Once those avenues are exhausted, then yes, the TFW program could be used.

• (1750)

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Do I have any time?

The Chair: There's not enough for a question. I'm sorry.

We go over to Ms. Ashton, please.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you so much to our witnesses for coming back.

First, Mr. Thompson, I'd like to pick up on a question I asked the first time you were here. When last we met I asked you for the department's comments on Minister Mihychuk's intentions to abolish the temporary foreign worker program, intentions that were voiced on April 18. You said you couldn't speak for the minister, but perhaps you can tell us now whether anything has changed and whether the department is planning the abolition of the temporary foreign worker program.

Mr. Paul Thompson: Again, I can't speak for the minister. I know she's eagerly awaiting the report of the committee, and I think her responses to this question to date have been all about having referred it for examination by this committee and looking forward to the report. There have been no other policy pronouncements on the future of the program.

Ms. Niki Ashton: That is interesting to note, because it was a very clear statement that was relayed to us. Obviously April 18 is weeks prior to our coming up with this study, so it's unclear how such an emphatic statement was made prior to the report's coming out and, frankly, prior to the study's beginning.

I want to go back also to the question we asked around inspections. You mentioned that 85 inspectors are on staff. Could you tell us how many on-site inspections have been made up to now in 2016 and what the rate of compliance with labour regulations was?

Mr. Paul Thompson: I have some figures on that.

You mentioned the number of staff we have on strength right now doing inspections. These are for both on-site inspections and other forms of inspections or reviews. There have been 6,280 inspections or reviews completed to date since April 2014.

The on-site inspections are an activity that's a little newer in the tool kit. We started those last fall. They've been ramping up. We currently have 74 that are completed or in progress, and we're on a path to do those with greater frequency in the future.

Ms. Niki Ashton: And those are inspections relating to work places that temporary foreign workers are—

Mr. Paul Thompson: Those are the on-site inspections of employers with temporary foreign workers.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Judge or Ms. Welbourne, on April 4 Minister McCallum in one of his speeches said, "We're less keen on the temporary foreign worker stream because we want permanent residents."

If we read this while keeping in mind the employment minister's intentions of ending the program, how is Immigration and Citizenship Canada preparing to transform the temporary foreign worker program into an immigration program?

Ms. Maia Welbourne: Let me make a point of clarification, that of course Minister McCallum is responsible for the international mobility program, which is the aspect of foreign workers coming in without the requirement for a labour market test. There are a number of elements to that overall program.

I think what Minister McCallum has said publicly is that he supports the premise of the programs whereby Canadians should be considered first for available employment opportunities, and certainly permanent residents who are arriving through immigration are part of that mix, and he would support, especially in an era of increasing levels, that permanent residents who have arrived through various streams be looked to as an important source of labour.

That being said, I think we've also seen appreciation for groups of temporary residents, such as international students and other foreign workers who have gained valuable work experience, being able to transition to permanent residency through various programs.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I appreciate the clarification, although the quote I read refers to temporary foreign workers. Again, what I'm seeking here is an understanding of the intent frankly of both ministers for the future of this program. Obviously the Minister of Employment's statement to get rid of the program entirely is a very strong one, and unfortunately, we're not getting background as to whether in fact that is the intention.

I want to go back to the issue of delays in processing in immigration. We know that delays are a constant problem that industry and various employers have faced, and obviously people who are seeking to work and live here. I'm wondering what the department is doing to speed up the expediting of these files and how many new resources are planned to be allocated to make sure that the processing part of the programs remains vigorous and enforced.

• (1755)

The Chair: There remains about one minute.

Ms. Maia Welbourne: Just for clarification, are you talking about the temporary resident side or the permanent resident side?

Ms. Niki Ashton: I mean the permanent resident side.

Ms. Maia Welbourne: I think Minister McCallum has been very clear that addressing longer processing times is a priority for him, and he has made public statements to that effect.

I would note that processing times vary depending on what stream individuals are coming through. In any case, I've mentioned that the standard for express entry processing times is six months, and that processing standard is being met. In other areas, particularly those related to family reunification, a commitment has been made to address. I'm not in a position right now to talk about additional resources or what that exactly would involve, but the commitment is there.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

I believe we're going back to Ms. Tassi.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: I'm going to ask my question of Mr. Judge, but before I do, let me acknowledge that previously on our panel, Mr. McAlpine shared two wonderful success stories with the temporary foreign workers program. It was great to hear about those. So with the challenges that we're raising, we just want to get into detail about how we can manage this program to the best of its ability.

One of the concerns, Mr. Judge, that we have heard is that Canadian wages have been suppressed because of the temporary foreign worker program. Has the department performed any studies on suppressed wages, and is there any evidence that has been issued to address this subject?

Mr. Paul Thompson: I think wage analysis would most likely fall under Employment and Social Development.

We monitor wages quite carefully. We track wages for hundreds of different occupations and do so for each occupation in many regions across the country, and these are posted. These form the basis for the way we process the application, so that the employer has to pay above the prevailing wage in a given occupation.

We also use the wage to determine whether it's a low wage and is processed in the low wage stream with an extra set of worker protections or whether it's processed in the high wage stream. The wage analysis we do is very important for setting a credible prevailing wage.

As for wage suppression, it's a hard question to get a definitive answer to. There was a little bit of analysis done in the context of the dramatic increase of temporary foreign workers in Alberta during the oil boom, and there was some evidence, including some by outside commentators, of wage suppression in that instance. That's about the only example I can point to in which we've discovered this with some degree of certainty.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: I guess my follow-up to that is that you don't see the temporary foreign workers program as resulting in a suppression of wages in cases in which, if those wages were perhaps a little higher, Canadian workers would accept those jobs.

Mr. Paul Thompson: I would hesitate to say that there's no wage.... I think it's a valid question. It's a difficult one to answer, and I don't have a definitive response, unfortunately.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: But you don't have any evidence that this is in fact the case, then; you have no evidence of it.

Mr. Paul Thompson: I would say it's a concern of the department, which is why we set this prevailing wage, to make sure that a fair wage is set, but it's an open question. Wages are set at the margin, and it would be an interesting question for some more definitive economic analysis of what the overall impact of wage suppression is.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Okay.

I think this is to you, Mr. Thompson, but if I'm wrong, it's to whomever is best suited to answer.

What formal procedures are there for consulting with provincial and regional governments about the TFW program, and do you believe that local and provincial governments have the power to regulate the program or at least have a say in the total numbers?

Mr. Paul Thompson: There's quite a bit of activity with provinces and territories. I have regular conversations with my counterparts on the labour market side, both with respect to sharing data on the use of the program so that we can orient training programs to maximize jobs for Canadians and also working with them on validating the needs for temporary foreign workers and determining the priorities for a given jurisdiction. We have an agreement whereby provinces can identify priority occupations to which we apply a 10-day processing standard. If a province had a certain project or set of occupations that was critical to the economy, we would reach agreements on speed of processing. That's another example.

A third example of collaboration would be information sharing agreements that we're in the process of establishing with provinces to share information with labour ministries on compliance information, so that if a given employer had a history of non-compliance with provincial labour law, we would more readily get that information and use it in the administration of the program.

● (1800)

Ms. Filomena Tassi: I have some people coming to my office who are having problems achieving permanent resident status. Some migrants are refused and have to apply multiple times. What are the obstacles facing migrants when applying for permanent resident status?

Ms. Welbourne, are you the...?

Ms. Maia Welbourne: Without knowing the particulars of what stream or programs they're seeking to achieve permanent residence through, it's difficult for me to comment, but for foreign workers in particular there are several streams available, whether it's the federal skilled worker program or the Canadian experience class, which is based on an individual's having at least one year of skilled work experience, or others.

There's a range of requirements to be met. Again, without knowing the specifics of what the issues are with the programs....

Ms. Filomena Tassi: You haven't heard of a problem, generally, whereby people are becoming frustrated at attaining permanent residency; not specifically, but just generally, as a....

Ms. Maia Welbourne: Again it comes down to there being a limited number of spaces every year in the levels plan, and there is essentially competition for those spaces.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ruimy, please.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Thompson, in 2014 the previous government announced that ESDC would no longer process LMIA applications in accommodation, food services, and retail trade in economic regions with an unemployment rate of 6% or higher.

My first question on that is, what sort of outcomes did we see because of this measure?

Mr. Paul Thompson: The rationale behind that measure was that these were areas of the program that were fairly heavily used and that were in generally low-skilled areas in which, in labour markets with above a 6% unemployment rate, there's an expectation that there will be more Canadians available for those jobs, so that measure was put in place.

It's a hard and fast rule on the processing side, so the employers essentially were compelled to find Canadian workers as a result of that measure. There's no more processing done in these areas and so no temporary foreign workers. It's a refusal to process the application right at the front end of the process.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: We heard in previous testimony about Whistler, for instance, where they have a lower unemployment rate and severe challenges in finding workers to employ. How does that factor into this? We have heard testimony throughout about different regions that are lower than the 6%. They're claiming that they're struggling.

Mr. Paul Thompson: I'm trying to remember whether the economic region that Whistler is in is above or below the 6%.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: It's below the 6%.

Mr. Paul Thompson: Below the 6%? They're not subject to the refusal to process.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: They're below, right?

A voice: They're above.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: I'm sorry. They're above.

Mr. Paul Thompson: Okay. So they are subject to the refusal to process.

I do know that in the Whistler case, which I'm familiar with, they made particular use of the international mobility program. The actual use of what's now called the temporary foreign worker program was surprisingly small, but use was very significant in the international mobility program, including the international experience Canada program. I think that at some point that program was misunderstood by some stakeholders as actually being the TFW program, where the refusal-to-process rule was in play. They were historic users of the international mobility program and they continue to be.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Do you think this is an effective way to encourage domestic hiring?

Mr. Paul Thompson: Having the international mobility...?

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Here's the thing. We talk about the TFWs. Again, we're not hiring locals. We're giving jobs to people outside the country.

There are cases of both, which we can find throughout all of the testimonies we've been hearing, but I guess the question comes back to how we can continue to hire local people. We've heard that you can put an ad in *The Globe and Mail* and if nobody answers it, great, you can go get an LMIA. Here's where I'm trying to get an understanding: by limiting it to an employment rate, is that an effective way to hire domestic people?

• (1805)

Mr. Paul Thompson: In and of itself, I would say it's insufficient. There has to be a suite of other measures put in place. We're working

with employers across the country to get more access to labour market information.

Our national job bank is one such vehicle to promote job vacancies across the country. Any jobseeker anywhere in Canada can see a job posted in Whistler in the job bank or on other job boards, so that's one avenue.

I also mentioned the work we're doing with provinces and territories. We are working with British Columbia to orient their programming to meet some of these needs.

I would also say our youth employment strategy and our expanding indigenous labour market programs also show a lot of promise for meeting some of the needs.

The international mobility program or the TFW rules, I would agree, are only part of the solution. These other measures would be essential to get Canadian take-up of these jobs.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Thank you very much.

Mr. Judge, you've been very quiet, so I'll throw something at you.

Reforms were introduced in 2014 to restrict long-term needs met by TFWs. The previous government said the measure "emphasizes to both workers and employers that employment under the TFWP is intended to be temporary in nature, and encourages the use of appropriate programs and pathways to permanent residence where available."

Can you please describe the relationship between the TFW program and the pathway to citizenship?

The Chair: In about one minute, please.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: It will have to be a good one.

Mr. Robert Judge (Director, Temporary Resident Policy and Program Division, Immigration Branch, Strategic and Program Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): On the temporary foreign worker program and pathways to citizenship, most of our permanent residency pathways, as I think folks have noted, are at the NOC O, A, and B levels. These are the folks who are going to have the best chance of succeeding economically as permanent residents and successfully settling and integrating in Canada in an immigration program where there is a limited number of spots available and there's competition for those spots.

There aren't many pathways for NOC C and D skill levels, so to the degree to which the temporary foreign worker program fills positions at the NOC C and D levels, there are fewer pathways to permanent residency for that program.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

Monsieur Deltell, we have time for a few questions.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you so much, *mesdames et messieurs*. It's a pleasure for me to meet you. It's the first time that I have a chance to speak with high-ranked civil servants of your department, and I appreciate it.

I have some questions that may not be specific to your department, but I do have some specific questions. I don't know if you were here, but an hour ago we had the very sensitive comments and testimony of Madam Pinky Paglingayen. She's a Filipino. She's worked for more than 10 years in a home as a nanny, in that kind of job. Her testimony was very emotional, because she talked about abuse. She talked about betrayal. She talked about the fact that it's the worst thing.

As a Canadian citizen, and especially as a Canadian member of Parliament, I can't believe that I'm seeing that kind of testimony in 2016. That's unbelievable and unacceptable. As a Canadian citizen, I can't accept that kind of testimony, but I have to deal with that today. What can you do as public civil servants to address those difficult, tough, but so important issues?

Mr. Paul Thompson: I can start, and maybe Janet can jump in. I didn't hear the testimony, but I will certainly undertake to follow up and learn more about that case.

In the low-wage stream of the program, which this would fall under now, likely, as.... It could be—

• (1810)

Ms. Janet Goulding (Director General, Temporary Foreign Worker Program, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): It could go under either.

Mr. Paul Thompson: Yes. We have to know in what stream it's being processed. There are more worker protections in the low-wage stream of the program. That's where there is a requirement for transportation, health insurance, and workers' compensation. A number of worker protection measures come with the low-wage stream of the program. There are even more, as I've mentioned, that come under the seasonal agricultural worker program, where the country of origin provides additional supports.

I mentioned the tip line, which gets some promotion. Whether or not this individual was aware of the tip line, I can't say, or whether or not there's a violation in this case, in which case the employer is subject to penalties and, potentially, if the violation is serious, a lifetime ban on using the program in the future. We take non-compliance quite seriously, but we have to look at the specific circumstances in this case.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Don't mistake me. I don't want to trap you. I just want to explain the situation. As you are a high-ranked civil servant in the department, it's a great opportunity for us to address it.

Do you have any information about that tip line? Do you have any figures or any statistics on how many people ask about your tip line or about abuse and betrayal?

Mr. Paul Thompson: As I mentioned, there have been about 3,800 tips that have been received to date. These have resulted in about 640 inspections that our staff have done as a result of these tips, of which 220 where it was considered a pretty serious matter have been referred to other law enforcement agencies. Those are some of the examples of how the tip line works.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Well, I don't have a degree from MIT, but the fact is that I can say that only one in six has received an inspection. Is that right?

Mr. Paul Thompson: Three hundred have led to inspections. The others were examined. We examined the tips—

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Okay. All of them were examined?

Mr. Paul Thompson: They would all be looked at, yes—

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Okay.

Mr. Paul Thompson: —but whether or not the number I gave you resulted in a formal inspection....

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Okay. I thought it was only one in six.

The Chair: You have time for about one more question.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Are we the first to raise this question with you?

Mr. Paul Thompson: On the inspections?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Not on the inspections, but about the fact that people who dream to live in Canada are betrayed and abused here on our soil.

Mr. Paul Thompson: There is certainly awareness of the risks in the program, which I would say is the whole rationale for this pretty significant compliance effort and the tip lines that we have. We're constantly looking at ways to improve the enforcement, and we will look at this incident as well as others.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you so much, *mesdames et messieurs*.

The Chair: Thank you.

We've run slightly past our goal of 6:10 and we do have to move very quickly to get back to the House for a series of votes this evening, but I do want to take a brief moment to thank all of you for coming back and allowing us to do our due diligence on this study. Thank you very much

The meeting is adjourned.

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