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Chair

Mr. David Tilson

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•(0850)

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): We are now in public session.

Welcome to the 38th meeting of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Today, we begin our study on promoting economic prosperity through settlement services.

Over the two hours of the meeting, we will be hearing from witnesses from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

Thank you all for joining us today. We are pleased to welcome you.

We have with us Ms. Tapley, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy; Ms. Pateman, Acting Director General, Integration and Foreign Credentials Referral Office; Mr. Gionet, Acting Director General, Refugee Affairs; Mr. Mansour, Acting Director, Horizontal Policy and Programs, Integration - Foreign Credentials Referral Office; and Ms. Primeau, Director General, Integration Program Management Branch. Welcome everyone.

You will start with the opening remarks, after which we will continue with questions from the members of the committee.

The floor is yours.

Ms. Catrina Tapley (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[English]

As you've introduced, my name is Catrina Tapley, and I am the assistant deputy minister for strategic and program policy at Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

My colleagues and I are pleased to appear before your committee. We hope that our testimony today will be helpful as you undertake your study on promoting economic prosperity through settlement services. This, of course, is an issue we are intently focused on within our department, and I'm glad to have the opportunity to outline the opportunities and challenges we have encountered, as well as some of the actions we've undertaken in this area.

[Translation]

As we formulate our policies and practices at CIC, we do so with the prevailing understanding that the work of immigration doesn't end after we identify and select the immigrants we need.

[English]

We know we must also make sure that immigrants can then actually put their skills to use in our labour market as soon as possible after they arrive so they can fully participate in the economic, social, cultural, and civic life in Canada. Canada is recognized as an international leader in the settlement and integration of newcomers. This reputation has been built over time through positive immigrant outcomes and high public support for immigration.

[Translation]

Indeed, the success of our immigration system depends on ensuring that the hundreds of thousands of newcomers who arrive in Canada each year are welcomed, integrated into the Canadian family, and encouraged and supported so they can contribute fully to Canadian society.

[English]

As you know, this year we will have the highest planned annual level of immigration admissions in recent Canadian history. We plan to welcome between 260,000 and 285,000 new permanent residents, which is a notable increase from the planning range of 240,000 to 265,000 that we had in place since 2007. As well, almost 65% of overall admissions in 2015 will be in the economic immigration class, which reflects our focus on ensuring that the immigration system contributes to Canada's future prosperity.

At the same time, we are continuing our long-standing humanitarian tradition of protecting refugees. As you know, on January 7, 2015, Minister Alexander announced that Canada would resettle an additional 10,000 Syrians over the next three years and an additional 30,000 Iraqis in 2015.

•(0855)

[Translation]

Canada remains one of the most attractive places for people around the world seeking to build new lives for themselves in a new country.

[English]

Naturally, this high level of interest in Canada as a destination for immigrants creates challenges, but it has also opened up the opportunity to improve our integration and settlement systems. One expression of the improvements we have made is the fact that settlement funding has remained at record levels in recent years. Over the last decade, the government has tripled funding for newcomers' settlement services in jurisdictions outside Quebec, from less than \$200 million in 2005-06, to almost \$600 million in 2015-16.

[Translation]

Unprecedented steps have also been taken to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials, as well as ensure that immigrants have access to microloans to allow them to bring their education and official language skills up to the Canadian standard.

[English]

Of course, we measure the true success of our settlement program in the outcomes we achieve in promoting and fostering integration and building welcoming communities. Let me talk briefly about the kinds of outcomes we look for at each stage of the immigration program.

We want newcomers to achieve economic success in Canada. We want them to thrive in our labour market, and in so doing, to contribute to Canada's future prosperity. We want them to develop a sense of belonging to Canadian society. We want them to become active citizens who make positive contributions to their communities and to our country as a whole. Whatever their background and personal history are, we want them to understand and respect our core Canadian values.

We want these successful outcomes for all immigrants, but of course we need to ensure that integration and settlement services are best targeted to those most in need. For example, refugees have specific settlement needs based on their pre-migration and migration experiences, and they are among the top users of these services. We recognize that resettled refugees in particular face complex needs that set them apart from other immigrants requiring specialized supports.

In Canada, resettled refugees are supported by private sponsors or the resettlement assistance program, RAP, which provides eligible refugees with immediate and essential services as well as income support when they first arrive in Canada.

Further, the Government of Canada supports settlement interventions that demonstrate the potential to effectively improve refugee outcomes, including services delivered pre-arrival or through a case management approach to provide more intensive long-term support.

[Translation]

Through the settlement program, the Government of Canada provides funding to a variety of organizations that offer programs and services that respond to the specific needs of permanent residents.

[English]

In 2012-13 more than 200,000 people used CIC settlement services. In a large number of these cases, service provider organizations were the first contact both pre- and post-arrival providing newcomers with culturally sensitive supports and links to community and social services.

Our settlement services are flexible and are designed to meet the needs of a diverse society. Information sessions, employment support, assessment of foreign education credentials, and referral services pre-arrival and in Canada are examples of interventions that help newcomers better use their skills and credentials in the Canadian workforce and prepare them for early integration into Canadian society.

My colleagues and I will be happy to speak in detail about any of these services in response to committee members' questions following the opening remarks. Of course it's important to talk about these services in the context of the many significant reforms to the immigration system in recent years to ensure that as we welcome newcomers to our country, we are also meeting Canada's economic and labour market needs.

As you know, the most notable and recent change we made was the introduction last month of express entry, our new application management system, which will enable us to select the most qualified candidates for economic immigration from a pool we have already confirmed as eligible to apply.

● (0900)

[Translation]

Express Entry will now help us to identify those potential immigrants who have the greatest chances to succeed in our labour market. This, of course, has many implications for our settlement and integration programs.

In selecting newcomers with the human capital that will maximize their long-term potential in Canada and become our future citizens, we expect to see more newcomers achieve great success and make positive contributions to Canadian society.

We also know that early settlement outcomes are best for newcomers who already have a job offer and are proficient in English or French.

[English]

We know the best way to integrate into Canadian society is to find a job for which one is qualified. With express entry, we expect that more newcomers will come to Canada with jobs, which means they will likely transition into their new life sooner and integrate more quickly and successfully. Consequently, we're in the process of determining how our integration and settlement services across the country can best adapt to this new reality. However, considering express entry was only implemented in January, more time will be needed to appropriately determine its impacts on the settlement needs of economic immigrants and their families.

We believe that a critical piece of this puzzle lies in the area of pre-arrival services, those that are delivered before an immigrant even gets to Canada. When we begin the settlement process for immigrants prior to their arrival in Canada, we help ensure that they arrive here better equipped for success and better prepared to begin contributing to our society and our economy. With that in mind, we recently launched a call for proposals for pre-arrival services targeting economic and family class immigrants, as well as refugees. This is the first step toward ensuring that a greater number of newcomers have access to such services either in person or online when possible, no matter where in the world they are originating. Through our settlement program we aim to help newcomers of all skill levels overcome integration barriers through services that provide general settlement information, language skills, employment-related supports, and support to build professional and personal networks within their new communities.

Finally, we continue to see settlement services playing a critical role in fostering effective integration to assist immigrants in fully participating in Canada's economy and society as this is key to our nation's ongoing prosperity.

My colleagues and I are happy to talk in more detail about any of these opening remarks or to answer any questions you may have on settlement and integration.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Thank you very much, Madam Tapley, for your opening remarks.

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Menegakis for seven minutes for questions.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): A big thank you to our officials from CIC for joining us today and for that quite thorough presentation.

You mentioned in your presentation that this government has increased settlement funding from almost \$200 million to about \$600 million today. I wonder if you could elaborate on that a little for us, and perhaps enlighten us on what has been the focus of that increase.

• (0905)

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, as we've noted, the government increased settlement funding in 2005-06 to about \$600 million. This year we will spend, I believe, \$584.5 million on settlement and integration services, so about \$600 million. With the increase in funding, we have been able to focus in clear detail on the

three primary needs in the settlement and integration services. I'd recommend the following priority in terms of the biggest barriers to achieving good integration outcomes in Canada.

The first is knowledge of an official language, knowledge of English or French. When immigrants arrive and they have difficulty communicating in English or French, it is the biggest single barrier to effective integration both in the community and certainly within the workforce. I should pause there for a moment. As you'll see, we spend about 45% of our budget on language training and supports around language training.

Another area we focus on or we talk about in effective integration relate to the recognition of foreign work experience. There are difficulties in employers recognizing foreign work experience, so programming that's focused on employment-related supports or community connections help to overcome some of that.

Finally, the last barrier to integration would be the problems of having foreign credentials recognized, certainly in regulated occupations.

That increase in funding has allowed us to focus more fully on those three big barriers to successful integration, and also on the breadth of our services across the country.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

You mentioned in your presentation the tabling in the House by the government with respect to the 2015 immigration levels. Of course, they range from 260,000 to 285,000 people, which you correctly note is a record number for planned immigration for the year.

Can you explain how settlement services will adapt to accommodate these changing conditions? If I'm not mistaken, on the high side that's about 25,000 more people this year than in previous years. It represents about 0.8% of our population.

We're delighted that people from all around the world want to come to our great country, but I wonder if you could explain how you plan to adapt settlement services to accommodate this changing phenomenon.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, one of the things that's happening in conjunction with the increased number of new arrivals expected this year with an increased level plan is that we're also seeing an increase in skills on the side of skilled workers who are coming. So there's a certain offset that happens between those two things.

As I believe the committee is well aware, we've made a number of changes in recent years that focus on skilled workers. There are increased language levels before people get here, so part of the process is around that. There's a focus on younger immigrants, and a focus on more points in our system around experience and other factors that are there. It has a bit of a compensating effect, I think, in terms of how our settlement services are run.

The other thing I would note about settlement services is we tend to follow very closely where immigrants settle in Canada. We allocate our funds internally across our three domestic regions: Ontario, the eastern region, which includes the four Atlantic provinces for settlement services, and the western provinces and the territories. We allocate funds based on a formula of where immigrants settle. We look at a three-year rolling average of where immigrants have settled when they come into Canada. We give extra weight or we overweight the formula for refugees to recognize their settlement needs. So we adjust funding based on where immigrants are going. What we've seen in recent years is more funds being spent in western Canada, where we're seeing more immigrants coming.

Then within years, we're able to adjust even within regions on where immigrants are actually settling to make sure that we have a number of services in particular areas where we're seeing new arrivals come. I would say that's part of where we're able to adjust.

Also—we can get into this later; I don't mean to mix too many things—we're on the verge of a national call for proposals on settlement services, which will happen later this spring. That will help to set the tone for settlement services for the next few years, to have programming in place that meets the needs of these levels by April 1, 2016.

• (0910)

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Thank you, Mr. Menegakis.

Mr. Sandhu, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Thank you for being here this morning.

There are many factors when it comes to integrating new immigrants into Canadian society. One of the things that I often hear in my riding and in various cities across this country is the idea of credentialling, ensuring that people have their foreign qualifications recognized here. I see that we have an office in the immigration department that helps with that.

Could you briefly talk about what that office does and how it helps people get their qualifications upgraded or evaluated here?

Ms. Natasha Pateman (Acting Director General, Integration and Foreign Credentials Referral Office, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Madam Chair, yes, we do have the foreign credential referral office. There is a difference; many of you might notice in the documentation credentials versus qualifications. In the federal government, we use credential, which typically refers more to an education level; whereas qualification is a broader range of credentials, experience, and skill level. That's just the difference there, but it's interchangeable; the provinces and territories prefer qualifications and we use credential.

In the office, we provide information to newcomers beginning pre-arrival. We also provide pathfinding and referral services. We collaborate with Service Canada. They deliver services through the Service Canada offices all across the country as well as through the 1-800 number and their website. We will refer an engineer, for example, planning on going to Ontario, and they will connect them to the professional engineers association in Ontario. Even before arrival, people can start to have their credentials assessed.

Many of the regulatory bodies we've been working with—we started with 14 initially under the pan-Canadian framework, and now we work with 24 in total—have improved their processes dramatically. Many have fabulous websites where people can do practice exams or actually even do credential exams now as part of the credential process pre-arrival. There has also been a faster, timely process in having credentials recognized.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: If I'm an engineer from a different country and I want to settle in British Columbia, would I be referred to the engineering college or where?

Ms. Natasha Pateman: That's right. You would be referred to the B.C. professional engineers association, and there's a website. The B.C. government also has competency profiles for all the professional designations. That person would be directly referred to the professional body. They would find out that there are online exams available. They would be able to find out the labour market information for engineers in B.C.

Through the B.C. government, and also through the federal government and the work we do collaboratively, you would also be able to get into bridging programs and find out where you can gain Canadian work experience. One of the pieces with credentials is that even after you have the paper-based credentials assessed and verified, there's also still a competency piece in order to know that people can actually do the job. There are work placements, or for doctors there are residency requirements.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: You mentioned doctors. I have a number of doctors who have come in over the year. Not only medical doctors but also veterinarian doctors have come to the province of British Columbia. What they find are obstacles that hinder them from furthering their education or getting certification from these bodies.

How are you finding interacting with these bodies? I hear from my constituents that, yes, they have these paper credentials that say they're an engineer and all that, but it is still very difficult to get into these clubs, if you want to call them that, for them to actually get the official certification and present it to employers.

• (0915)

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, this is, I think, one of the toughest issues we deal with for a number of reasons. I'll just back up a little bit.

The process of credential recognition in regulated occupations is a tough one, in part because of jurisdictional issues. It's provincial jurisdiction, and then provinces have further subdelegated responsibility to the regulatory bodies themselves. There are probably more than 200 or 300 actors in the system in the credential recognition process, so getting everybody to steer in the same direction is not without its challenges.

Some regulated occupations, I think, are at a bit of a different stage, one with the other, in terms of how they've adapted, or in the services they're providing under the pan-Canadian framework in recognizing foreign qualifications. The 24 occupations that Ms. Pateman spoke about have all committed to assess a person's foreign qualifications within 12 months and to offer an answer back on whether or not credentials can be accepted and, more to the point, what the gaps are in terms of that credentialing process.

Some regulatory occupations have gone so far now as to use national bodies and to work on a more national system in where we are. We've seen great success that way. We're optimistic. Our sister department, Employment and Social Development Canada, recently launched a panel chaired by Nick Noorani, to look at some of the issues around credential recognition in employers. We're anxious to see the results of his work and the panel's work and to see about a bit of a path forward.

There are two other things that have helped a little bit. One is something called an education credential assessment that the federal government has put in place. What we require now of federal skilled workers who come in is something called an education credential assessment. It's not the same as having a licence to practise in a particular occupation, but it's an assessment of your education credential itself against a Canadian standard, which can often be helpful in terms of determining that credential recognition process.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Sorry, I have to interrupt you. The seven minutes are over.

I now give the floor to Mr. Casey.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): The programs that you described are, I presume, delivered in some cases directly by the Government of Canada and in other cases by agencies that are funded through the Government of Canada. I wonder if you could explain the mix or the role in terms of what programs are directly delivered by CIC or the government.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: The federal government delivers almost none directly. They're delivered by service provider organizations. We work with about 700 service provider organizations that we choose, by and large, through call for proposals. This enables us to assess good value for money in terms of who we're funding and what services they're providing in their offering.

Mr. Sean Casey: When these service provider organizations win a call for proposals and start to deliver what they promise, the role of the bureaucrats, the role of your department, I presume, is to monitor and assess their performance against their promises.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: That's exactly right.

Mr. Sean Casey: Is that done remotely? Is that done from Ottawa, or is that done from one of the regional centres? You talked about having three regions: Ontario, east of Ontario, and west of Ontario. Is the role of the bureaucrats centralized?

• (0920)

Ms. Catrina Tapley: We do both. Part of it is centralized in Ottawa, but a lot of the direct interaction with service provider organizations happens in the regions and in local offices.

Heather, do you want to expand on that?

Ms. Heather Primeau (Director General, Integration Program Management Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Madam Chair, what we do from Ottawa is we basically provide the functional guidance to the regional offices for them to monitor and work with the service provider organizations. We do have a small number of agreements that we manage from Ottawa, mainly pilot projects and the pre-arrival services as well. For the most part, what we do is we provide the functional guidance, the tools, and the oversight to ensure that there's a consistent approach across the country.

Mr. Sean Casey: Do you have a presence in every province?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Yes.

Mr. Sean Casey: Tell me about your presence in Prince Edward Island. That's where I'm from.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: And as I said yes, I wanted to make sure... A lot of—

Mr. Sean Casey: Go ahead and correct it, if you wish.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Pardon me?

Mr. Sean Casey: Go ahead and correct it. You said "yes", and then you said "as I said yes", and when I told you where I was from, you hesitated. Do you want to correct it?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: As I said yes, I was thinking about Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Sean Casey: Yes.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: No, I don't believe that we have an office in Prince Edward Island, but I do believe that we have staff co-located with Service Canada in Prince Edward Island. I'll have to double-check on that, Madam Chair, but I do think we have staff co-located.

Mr. Sean Casey: I can help you. You have one employee who is inaccessible to the public. In terms of service delivery and in terms of people, anyone looking for any inquiries is directed to a website, a 1-800 number, a regional office, or the local member of Parliament.

In terms of your settlement programs....

How much time do I have? I just have one minute? Okay.

I want to talk about the demographic challenges that we face in the maritime provinces with regard to depopulation. You talked about dollars following settlement patterns. Where you don't have a presence in an area and people are leaving because of a lack of services, don't we really have a chicken-and-egg situation?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, I would note a couple of things.

One is that we do have service provider organizations that provide services in Prince Edward Island, and in every province and territory in Canada, as a matter of fact, outside of Quebec. Quebec, as you know, manages its own settlement and integration program. There are service provider organizations in Prince Edward Island that provide services to newcomers who are there.

We work directly with provinces to work cooperatively on the programs that are provided.

The third thing I would note is that the provincial nominee program has been particularly helpful in directing more new arrivals away from Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.

Mr. Sean Casey: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...can't keep them—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): I'm sorry, but I have to interrupt you.

Thank you, Mr. Casey.

Mr. Leung, you have the floor.

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Let me address this issue of the split, the allocation of \$600 million. How much of it goes to refugee resettlement services and how much of it goes to the regular stream of the other immigrant population?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, there's a separate allocation for the refugee assistance program. It's about \$55 million. Refugees are eligible for settlement services for that \$600 million or so, but there is a separate envelope dedicated to specific supports for refugee assistance, including income in the first year and other supports around that.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: The \$600 million, I gather from the prior discussion, would not include Quebec. Quebec has a separate pool. Could you give us a number for that, please?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: In the last fiscal year.... I'll back up just a bit. There is a separate accord between Canada and Quebec related to immigration. Under the accord, Canada provides a grant to the Province of Quebec in recognition of settlement services provided. It's based on a formula. The formula has a couple of different aspects to it, and I'm happy to speak to that. In the last fiscal year, it was about \$340 million.

• (0925)

Mr. Chungsen Leung: I come from the private sector, where our measuring stick is often what is the right return for investment. Based on these figures and based on how many primary residents or immigrants we helped out, could you give me an idea of what the cost is per person assisted and also whether we tracked them within a year or two years of landing, say, to see how successful they are? Is that program in place as a measurement of our effectiveness?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, we have recently built a new system called iCARE, immigrant contribution agreement reporting environment, that enables us to track on a per service, per immigrant, or per client basis how much we're spending on particular services. It's in the process of getting up and running now. It will allow us to track across different service provider organizations, too, in terms of how different services or the costs of different services relate from

one area of the country or from one service provider organization to another. We certainly look carefully at those costs and how those are measured.

The other question is around how we track outcomes or improvements over one, two, three, and future years. We are blessed with good data in this department from the immigrant tax-filer database. We're able to track outcomes of immigrants over time. We're able to couple that a bit in a disaggregated way with those who've received services and those who haven't received services. It's not perfect, but it does give us a good approximation of where services have been effective and what the bump is between those who've received language training, for instance, and those who haven't received language training.

Ryhan, do you remember how much better people do if they've received services as opposed to if they haven't received services?

Mr. Ryhan Mansour (Acting Director, Horizontal Policy and Programs, Integration - Foreign Credentials Referral Office, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):

Madam Chair, that actually is something that we really look forward to implementing as of this year. In 2015-16 we will be implementing a new client outcome survey. Essentially a survey will be sent to every individual who receives one of the CIC funded services, to be able to track them in time over the following two years so that we can compare their outcomes using the data from the IMDB, which is the taxpayers reported data, and make a correlation and somewhat of an attribution to those who have taken our services.

We are happy to have this in place and very much look forward to getting this new data starting next year, because it is built on the practice and the experience that we've had with pre-arrival services. We have done this for several years now—since 2007, I believe—with pre-arrival services, where we have seen that those who have taken CIC funded services pre-arrival do significantly better once they are in Canada, for instance, in the rate of employment, and at level....

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Let me just fine-tune that question a bit more.

For the resettlement funding, how do we distinguish between those immigrants who come in who we try to put in an employment placement versus those who are here as economic migrants and yet create their own jobs by investing in their own future? How do we distinguish between those two pools?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, I should say that our settlement services are open to all permanent residents. Our terms and conditions are such that we don't fund settlement services for citizens, nor do we do it for temporary residents. It's focused on permanent residents.

There are a number of people who never avail themselves of our services. The principal applicant who comes in with a job offer, good community connections, and who is quickly established may never touch our services, because they have a good pathway to integration and a job is very helpful.

What we find is that dependants of that principal applicant will avail themselves of our settlement services—a spouse, working-age or older children if they are there, parents or grandparents, if they've come in. They may avail themselves of our settlement services as well. So it tends to be self-selected that way.

We do some needs assessment in terms of those who come in, but those who have a pretty good path are doing well on their own.

• (0930)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Thank you, Mr. Leung. Your time is over.

Madam Mathysen, you have the floor.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you very much for being here.

I'm very interested in your expertise, because I have a number of questions which relate to what we find in my office every day.

The first question has to do with the Syrian refugees. The government has announced that we're going to see 10,000 refugees. The problem seems to be the resources allocated to process these government-sponsored refugees. We haven't heard that the government has declared the situation in Syria a crisis for people on the ground. When government-sponsored refugees get here, they're charged for the travel. In the case of many of these folks, they're arriving here in a desperate situation. Why are they being charged for their travel?

Also, what kind of process is in place in order to make sure that those 10,000 Syrian refugees actually get here? Are the resources available? I'm hearing that they're not.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, I'll start, and then I'll ask my colleague Monsieur Gionet to fill in a bit here as well.

Resources are in place to resettle the government's commitment of 10,000 Syrian refugees over the next three years. We have a matching centre. We work with other organizations to bring these refugees in. They are selected in one of three ways: as government-assisted refugees, as privately sponsored refugees, or as something called the blended visa officer referral program, but that one's pretty small. Most of them will come in as either privately sponsored refugees or government-assisted refugees.

Madam Chair, the government offers small repayable loans to refugees to cover the cost of travel, and they're repaid over a small period of time with a very high repayment rate. I'll comment briefly on outcomes for refugees. Outcomes for refugees don't tend to be as good as for other immigrants who are coming, but we do see a small difference between those who are privately sponsored refugees and those who are government-assisted refugees. In the short-term, privately sponsored refugees have better outcomes than government-assisted refugees, although the two catch up with one another over time.

Monsieur Gionet.

Mr. Jean-Marc Gionet (Acting Director General, Refugee Affairs, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):

Madam Chair, there's not too much to add to what Ms. Tapley indicated, but maybe there's just one point of clarification in terms of

the resources being in place and the priority that we accord to the Syrian refugees. They are being prioritized for processing. We are seeing some faster processing for the Syrian cases especially coming out of our office in Beirut. We've seen the number of arrivals increasing. There is a recognition of the seriousness of the situation, and as I indicated, cases are being prioritized.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

I have two questions. First, what are the actual numbers? Can you give me those?

Second, there's a problem that has arisen in my office and we don't know how to resolve it, with immigrants who have lost their landing documents. They are no longer receiving a SIN card, and when they go to get provincial ID, they take their VOS, verification of status, with them. Citizenship will give them a VOS, but the Province of Ontario refuses to recognize it. They can't scan it. These people are really caught in a bind.

I wonder if you could respond to both those questions, please.

• (0935)

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, let me respond to the second question. We're happy to work with the member to provide information on the offices where people can go to have their documents replaced. I would be happy to provide additional information on that.

In terms of the numbers, I'm not sure I understood correctly, and I apologize. The number of resettled refugees in terms of the Syrian community is 10,000 over three years, with an additional 3,000 Iraqis for next year. If I can go to my handy-dandy cheat sheet for a moment, in terms of the admissions plan for 2015, for all categories of refugees, we can talk about the range. For government-assisted refugees overall it's between 5,800 and 6,500; for the blended visa office-referred refugees, which I spoke about, it's between 700 and 1,000; and for privately sponsored refugees it's between 4,500 and 6,500 refugees. That's our admissions plan for 2015.

I'm not sure if that's a correct—

Ms. Irene Mathysen: How many have actually arrived? That's my question. How many are here now? I know it takes a number of years to get them all here, but what—

Mr. Costas Menegakis: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I'm failing to see the relevance of that question in the context of this study. The number of refugees who are coming, and how many are here, how many are not here is not the purpose of this study. We're talking about settlement services.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Thank you for your comment. Perhaps Madam Mathysen can connect her question. So far I haven't seen that it is so disconnected, as in the opening remarks we talked about some targets for welcoming Syrian refugees. The remarks are still connected to the opening remarks.

Madam Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: That's it precisely, Madam Chair.

I do believe, Mr. Menegakis, that I can ask the questions that I see fit.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Your time has expired, unfortunately. Sorry about that.

Before we continue, Madam Tapley, I just want to be sure we understand that you will send us some information that you mentioned earlier to the committee.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Absolutely, Madam Chair. That's on replacement of documents.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Thank you very much.

Mr. Aspin, you now have the floor.

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Welcome to our guests.

I'd like to begin by complimenting you on the work your department provides for my riding. Your services are provided through North Bay; I've been very pleased with Immigration over the three and a half years that I've been a member.

We know that integration is the key to success in Canada. Many immigrants have come to Canada and found a career, started a family, and contributed to Canadian society.

Are there any programs now in which successful immigrants mentor new immigrants? If so, what mentoring programs and bridging programs are offered?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Immigrants and new arrivals in Canada are quick to give back. We see in almost all our service provider organizations—I'll start there—that a number of successful graduates of their program come back, or new immigrants come back, and want to mentor and help those who have recently arrived.

In terms of formal mentoring programs and internship programs, I can speak about two that the government assists with.

One is called the federal internship program for newcomers. This is a program through which in Vancouver, Victoria, Toronto, and Ottawa we work with immigrant-serving organizations. They pre-screen or pre-select groups of immigrants who are caught in the conundrum of having trouble finding a job because they don't have Canadian work experience and not having Canadian work experience because they're having trouble finding a job.

How do you help bridge that to give them Canadian work experience?

It's a program that started with the federal government, and we've expanded it to include private sector partners as well. Candidates are pre-screened and selected. They come in. They do a short *stage* or period inside the federal government. A lot of them move out into the private sector. It has about a 60% success rate in terms of people finding permanent employment after the program. I can tell you from personal experience that those hired through this program are incredible candidates who really just need a chance to develop that Canadian work experience, and they can then go from there.

In terms of a mentorship program, Ms. Pateman, do you want to speak to that?

● (0940)

Ms. Natasha Pateman: We also have a mentoring program within the public service. The public service is the largest employer in Canada, and we have, of course, many professional occupations. We are involved in providing mentorship as well as in helping newcomers with resumé writing, expanding their professional networks in the local community, and things like that.

The other thing I'd like to mention is that we have recently been piloting mentorship programs for refugees, working with refugees who have been in Canada quite a while and who have become quite successful. It's a bit like a speed-dating club, at which they will meet for a couple of hours. The new refugees move from table to table to find out about tips and tricks and things like that from refugees who have been in Canada for a while. We've piloted that in the Lower Mainland in British Columbia, and it has been quite successful so far. We're going to continue to try that across the country to see what the outcomes are.

Mr. Jay Aspin: Education is another key element in the success of immigrants. Could you tell me how Citizenship and Immigration is working to assess education of foreign nationals?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, that relates to an earlier question on credential recognition.

One of the things the federal government has done is it has instituted the education credential assessment program. Through a call for proposals, we work with five organizations that will assess education credentials before people arrive. As part of applying for a federal skilled worker program, we ask that you have your education credentials assessed against a Canadian standard. For example, is your engineering degree from a particular country equivalent to an engineering degree in Canada?

It's not a guarantee that you'll have success as part of the regulated occupation, but it's a pretty good understanding. In some countries, what would be known as an engineering degree is more like a trade certificate or an engineering technician certificate. So, having that education credential beforehand helps to really set expectations. It doesn't mean that you would not come to Canada, but it gives a better set of expectations around the hurdles in terms of education credentials. It's also some assurance for employers that this is an education credential that has been assessed or is understood in Canada.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Thank you.

Sorry, the time is up.

Mr. Eglinski, you have the floor.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Thank you all for coming today and being witnesses.

This is directed to Catrina. You mentioned express entry, the new application system designed to get people with the skills to succeed in Canada's economy faster than ever. This means that employers are playing a more direct role in selecting immigrants, but that is only one part of the integration process.

Can you expand on this and give me the other factors leading to success in Canada?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, we're very excited about express entry. It is a brand new application management system or new program for us that has been in place since the first of January where employers and provinces have an opportunity to help select candidates, or help do a better match between labour market demand or jobs in the Canadian economy and new arrivals.

In addition to having a job, another barrier will be language. It's not just a case of coming with little knowledge of English or French, but also in some cases people arrive...or we'll say from our language benchmarking program that a person needs a language benchmark 7 to come in as a federal skilled worker, but really if they're going to be an engineer, they might require a 9 or 10 on the scale of language abilities. Part of our focus in our programming is really still how to get people from a good intermediate level to a more senior level in language training, which really helps improve their outcomes.

The other issues I spoke about earlier were around recognition of foreign work experience and credential recognition.

● (0945)

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Our government established a foreign credentials referral office in 2007. Can you please explain to this committee what its role is?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Its role was and is to assist with credential recognition and the difficulties associated with that by working with provinces, territories, and regulatory bodies. The big piece of work that has been associated with that is the pan-Canadian assessment for the recognition of foreign qualifications, which involves working with the 24 regulatory bodies that Ms. Pateman spoke about in terms of what the standards are in assessing those credentials.

The other things the office does is it looks at things like alternative employment. If a person is trained in a particular field and there's a real barrier to getting the credential recognized in that regulated occupation, the office looks at whether there are alternative careers that the person might be well suited for that are an easier fit. That has been a very promising area to work with employers on and to work with others on, to open up different avenues under that. The other is also working with employers on developing employer tool kits and employer handbooks on hiring new arrivals, new immigrants to Canada who look at what's involved in terms of recognizing foreign work experience, credential recognition process.

The other part where I think we've had a great success with this office is the link between this and some of the work that we're doing pre-arrival or overseas. One of the programs is the CIIP, the Canadian immigrant integration program, which operates in four centres with bigger outreach overseas. It takes federal skilled workers and provincial nominees and brings them in for one-on-one tailored service. There's a general orientation day, but there's a second day—and this is all before they arrive—that is focused on their individual needs and on building a settlement plan that includes the recognition of foreign qualifications.

This is where we've seen some really promising results from two fronts on what this means. One is to understand well the challenges that will lie ahead in getting their credentials recognized in a regulated occupation and a path to do that, where to go, and what they can work on before they get here. Two, there is the need to understand the Canadian economy. The first response from many

will be Toronto or Vancouver because they've heard of those cities, but I think the CIIP has been successful in telling people they may want to think about the hot economy in Alberta or Saskatchewan, or the particular need in a certain province or area around a key occupation.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Thank you, Mr. Eglinski. You don't have any more time. It's over. Thank you very much.

Mr. Sandhu, you now have the floor.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: I don't think we got the answer in regard to how many Syrian refugees have settled here in the last year and what areas they have settled in, whether in British Columbia or Ontario. Could you provide us with those numbers?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: It's about 1,100, Madam Chair.

Mr. Gionet, do we have numbers where they've settled?

● (0950)

Mr. Jean-Marc Gionet: Madam Chair, I don't have the information on where they've settled. We do know that there has been a lot of sponsorship applications out of Quebec because a large proportion of the Syrian population in Canada is in Quebec, but I don't have those figures in terms of in-Canada distribution.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Would you be able to provide those to the committee at a later date?

Mr. Jean-Marc Gionet: We can look into it, yes.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Thank you.

One of the other difficulties that service providers often mention is the longevity of the contract they're getting and having very short-term contracts. They're often left waiting to see if the funding is going to be allocated to a particular program until the very last minute.

Can you let us know what the department is doing in regard to having long-term funding available to the service provider rather than having a short-term funding available to them?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, it varies depending on, I think, the organization and the nature of the service. We do some on a longer term basis, but we try not to have all our agreements expire at the same time, so some are for a shorter term and some are for a longer term. In part this is based on risk in some areas, but also around needs assessment in terms of what we're looking at or where we want to see a particular contract come back.

Maybe Ms. Primeau can explain a bit how we manage some of this under the call for proposal and how we try to make sure that organizations are not left in limbo.

Ms. Heather Primeau: We have a larger proportion of longer-term agreements now than we did in the past through our modernization efforts with respect to advance contribution. We can have agreements for up to three years, but as Ms. Tapley indicated, it does depend on the project and it does depend on the risk of the service provider organization.

We have what we call a funding risk assessment model. That helps us determine the risk of the agreement we're entering into. That also helps us determine the number of financial and activity monitors that are needed across the life of the agreement, but it also informs the length of the agreement to an extent.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: One of the other questions I get from my constituents is the hours of accessibility to some of these programs in the communities. Not only that, they're often far away from where they live, and refugees and immigrants often don't have transportation to get there. How are you tackling all that?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, these are very good points. Part of what we do and part of the money we spend on settlement services also include support services. These are related to what we've identified as some of the barriers for people being able to take up settlement services, including transportation. In some cases we fund transportation to the particular settlement services. The other is child minding. One of the biggest barriers in having women come into our settlement services in many cases was related to their responsibilities to children, so we provide child minding with many of our programs

We try to look at a number of other supports. We try to watch closely the distribution of our settlement services so we have settlement services not just in major urban centres but in rural areas throughout the country. It's not perfect as you can imagine, Madam Chair, so we try to offer really good services, good video, online and additional programming that we can deliver remotely. This continues to be an area that we explore and we'd like to focus on.

• (0955)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Thank you very much.

Mr. Menegakis, you have the floor.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Madam Chair, in speaking about P.E.I., I was struck by the point Mr. Casey made earlier, so I thought I'd look up a bit of information that perhaps can assist our honourable colleague. The great province of P.E.I. has a population of almost 150,000, served very well by four members of Parliament. The 1,000 immigrants that choose P.E.I. as their new home on an annual basis are served not only by the members when they come to Canada, but certainly by funding through settlement services through an organization called the Prince Edward Island Association for Newcomers to Canada, which was funded in excess of \$1.7 million in 2013-14 through our contribution agreements like all other settlement operations across the country. Perhaps the member can note that, and it can be of some assistance to his office.

We know that when immigrants come to Canada, they contribute greatly both to our economy and to our society. We're a very multicultural country. Certainly, as I represent one of the more diverse constituencies in the country, I can attest to how dynamic and important the contribution of newcomers is to our country. In my opinion that helps make Richmond Hill the best town in the country.

I wonder if you can comment on how many permanent residents are in Canada today, and if you have information on how that compares with our peer countries.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Canada has one of the highest per capita rates of permanent immigration in the world. One of the countries we

compare ourselves most closely to is Australia. It depends on the year as to who holds the title in terms of per capita number of new arrivals in the country. One in five Canadians in this country is foreign born. In terms of the number of permanent residents in the country at any given time, I don't think I have that number in front of me, but I would be happy to get that back to you, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Thank you, Madam Tapley. The committee will wait for that information.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: I've had the privilege of visiting a lot of the settlement providers across the country. I've always been struck by the number of people that I've seen receiving service. These are grassroots operations that are providing real meaningful services. I visited one in Windsor, for example, and it was the opening of the day care component of the service provider. It was a wonderful opportunity for parents, newcomers to this country, that need language training and skills training so they can better integrate into Canada. They dropped their children off in this new child care for newcomers. I thought that's great. The kids are 30 seconds away from their parents while the parents are receiving service.

You mentioned earlier in your speech or in your response to one of the questions about some of the barriers that are commonly faced by newcomers to our country. Can you elaborate on what some of those are and perhaps the more important ones that we see?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, I've spoken about the big three barriers: language, foreign work experience, and foreign qualifications. There are a number of other barriers that immigrants face when they come to Canada. One is a sense of isolation and a lack of a community, so to speak. It has been our experience that they struggle to build personal and professional networks, and part of our settlement programming has been targeted in that area. I think it may help to explain the difference between the outcomes for privately sponsored refugees and government-assisted refugees. Privately sponsored refugees have slightly better outcomes than government-assisted refugees in the first instance because they're coming with a community that's prepared to support some of their needs and there is better community support around it. Isolation is a key issue as well.

• (1000)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Sorry, I will have to interrupt you. We are still in the five-minute round.

I will now give the floor to Mr. Hawn.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you to our witnesses for being here.

First of all, on a point of clarification, Ms. Tapley, I may have misheard, but regarding the number of Iraqi refugees coming in 2015, I think I heard once 30 and once 3,000. Can you confirm which number is correct?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Part of the government's commitment when it announced its commitment to an additional 10,000 Syrian refugees over three years was an additional 3,000 Iraqi refugees to be resettled over one year next year.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I thought you said 30 at one point. That's fine.

I have a question on the numbers in Quebec. It struck me that \$340 million in Quebec is a grant from Canada and \$600 million is for the rest of Canada other than Quebec. Is that correct?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: That's correct.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: As you said, this is by formula. The number doesn't quite match up on the surface. Are there more services provided in Quebec by that \$340 million than are provided in the rest of Canada with the \$600 million?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, the number in Quebec also includes services for refugees. There's a slight difference in terms of what's provided in Quebec and what's provided in Canada between those two envelopes. Our envelope of \$584 million doesn't include refugee assistance programs. That's another \$55 million. In Quebec that envelope would include assistance for refugees as well. The formula is based on two aspects. One is the net increase in federal government spending across all programs. If that goes up, so does the grant to Quebec with respect to immigration.

The other part is that it overcompensates for the number of non-Francophone speaking immigrants that the Government of Quebec selects. The formula has a floor, so if the net rate of overall spending is negative, it can't go down. It re-bases every year.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: That makes sense.

The organizations that get settlement funding and so on, how often do you audit these folks? Is it periodically? Is it continuous? What is the level of compliance? What's the action if somebody is not compliant?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: We do it based on risk. We call it the FRAM. This is the risk assessment model that we use around how often we monitor and how often we audit these organizations.

Ms. Heather Primeau: The funding risk assessment model is a consistent risk assessment that's applied to each contribution agreement and as Ms. Tapley indicated, that will determine how many monitors are needed over the course of the life of the agreement, both in terms of financial monitoring and activity monitoring.

The activity monitoring is the monitoring to see if the organizations are doing what they said that they would do in the agreement.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I'm not asking for examples by name, but are there examples of organizations that are non-compliant and have had their funding pulled? Has that happened?

Ms. Heather Primeau: There are a number of steps that are taken depending on the issues. If it's a minor issue, we will work with the organization to resolve that issue. If organizations are not meeting their outcomes, we can reduce funding. If there are serious issues, we can look at ending the agreement as well.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: On the calls for proposals for pre-arrival services and settlement services—you say you work with about 700 organizations across the country—are those calls for proposals accepted regionally, i.e., Ontario, east, and west, or are they provincial, local, or a combination of whoever happens to step up and apply?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: It's all of the above, Madam Chair.

When we go out, we'll go out this spring with a national call for proposal for settlement services in all areas outside of Quebec, including pre-arrivals—actually, not including pre-arrival services, as we've just done that one. We're currently assessing the bids that came in under that. We'll look at it and some organizations will offer services in a broader geographic area, so throughout the province. Others will be in a particular area or a particular niche. We assess all of those that we have needs in all of those spaces.

• (1005)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Basically, you throw it out nationally and then whoever—

Ms. Catrina Tapley: That's right.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: —applies gets fit into some kind of a pattern. That makes sense.

In terms of the pre-arrival services and settlement services—I guess this is probably an obvious question and obvious answer—are there gaps?

There would always be gaps, but who is out there trying to identify those gaps, and how quickly do we try to address those gaps?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): A very short answer, please.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Yes, we're trying hard and we hope the recent call for proposal on pre-arrival services helps to address a number of those gaps. We've increased funding in terms of what we're going to provide and oversee services to enable us to do that.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Madam Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I have a question in regard to money for resettlement programs in terms of what is in the budget. For example, in 2009-10, \$878 million was budgeted, but \$4,178,000 was not spent. Then in 2012-13, the budget was up to \$888 million, but the amount not spent was \$18,218,231.

Why was it not spent? Why was that money left there? Could it not be utilized? We're hearing that there is tremendous need in terms of these services. Could you explain that? I would appreciate it very much.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, I think those figures relate to CIC's budget as a whole and not just to the refugee assistance program.

There are a number of reasons for there being a lapse in our budget. Some money is what would be referred to as "ring-fenced" for special purposes. For instance, in health programs the moneys are fenced and, if they are not spent in that particular area, can't be reallocated within the department to use for other things. Those allocations account for some of the lapses.

Others are in other areas, and we may move back to settlement services with respect to some of this. We have seen some lapses in settlement services of funds provided: cases of organizations thinking they were going to be able to spend more money than they did and those funds not being completely spent within the year; sometimes delays in our getting funds out through a call for proposals will also account for some of the slippage in funds.

We monitor the situation very closely with respect to settlement dollars or our settlement envelope. I'm happy to report that this fiscal year it looks as though we will have much less of a lapse than we have had in the past. Traditionally, our lapse has been small on settlement programming; it's well less than 5% and probably less than 3%. That is where we are on this, and this year we will squeak in even tighter in spending every penny that is there for settlement programming.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Okay, thank you.

I want to clarify that we will.... Mr. Sandhu has reiterated that we would like to get the actual numbers of Syrian refugees for 2014 and perhaps a forecast in regard to 2015. In my office I have some very upset families who quite simply can't get their loved ones to Canada.

Also, concerning your promise in regard to the VOS, the proof of status, in Ontario OHIP is the only division that can scan the bar code on new citizenship documents, and so folks looking for a driver's licence or an ID card in Ontario are being sent away. Any help you could provide in that regard would be much appreciated, because the frustration of folks who are essentially without status is very evident.

Mr. Sandhu, did you have any questions?

• (1010)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: I don't know whether I may.

May I?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): You have one minute.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: That's wonderful.

Let's go back to credentialling again. I would like to know how many bureaucrats are working in B.C. Is there a physical office?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: I'm sorry but I don't have the number of CIC employees in British Columbia at my fingertips, Madam Chair. I'm happy to get back to you with that information.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Could you perhaps provide the number of people in the various provinces across Canada and if you have any physical offices in these provinces, tell us where evaluation of credentials is provided?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: A lot of the work on credentialling is done here in Ottawa, but throughout this, we work on credential recognition closely with Employment and Social Development Canada, including Service Canada, and there's a considerable footprint of people in British Columbia and in other provinces who are working on this situation.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Could you forward the numbers to the committee?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: I am happy to do so.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Mr. Leung, you now have seven minutes, as we start back at the first round of questions.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: I wish to follow up on my colleague's question regarding pre-arrival settlement service. How many pre-arrival service locations are there around the world? I must say I only know of two: one in Taipei and the other in Seoul, Korea. Both of these I have visited. Is there any anywhere else in the world?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, we have three organizations that are currently offering pre-arrival services.

One is an organization called S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and they offer services in Korea, Taipei, and Taiwan. They offer services to all newcomers except for refugees.

We work with a second organization, the International Organization for Migration. It offers a broad welcome to Canada program or Canada abroad program. It works in a lot of different countries and different locations and provides a one-day orientation service on coming to Canada. It serves all newcomers to Canada, including refugees.

The third program is the Canadian immigrant integration program, or CIIP. It has four main offices. This is the program I spoke about earlier that provides more individual settlement plans or services to federal skilled workers and provincial nominees who are coming to Canada. It operates out of London, Delhi, Beijing, and Manila. Then from those offices it will also serve other countries, but those are its four primary locations.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: In terms of the specific area of service, is it primarily for employment, education, family integration, or societal integration?

Also, how do we provide the services that allow them to integrate into rural parts of Canada versus urban parts of Canada? In the urban part of Canada there is always the core group of immigrant communities already there. They integrate very easily. But in certain other parts that are rural it may be a little bit harder.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Pre-arrival integration services focus on all of the elements that were mentioned, Madam Chair. We'll focus a lot on integration generally into Canadian society through the program that's offered by the International Organization for Migration and S.U.C.C.E.S.S. It will touch more lightly on employment issues as they are trying to cram a lot into a day. As well, they really emphasize where newcomers can go to receive settlement services in Canada and provide that. There are also some basic services and these are highlighted in *Welcome to Canada*, which is our guide for newcomers. There are simple things like opening a bank account or getting a driver's licence or health services or how you go about navigating those. They'll concentrate a lot on that.

The CIIP focuses more intensively on that economic integration. They will focus on things like the credential recognition process and what the labour market needs are in Canada. They have been quite successful, I think, in terms of directing people to where other opportunities are. It's a way to offer people alternatives to the large urban centres of Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.

•(1015)

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Have we had enough history for the pre-arrival centres to compare those to the onshore centres to evaluate their effectiveness? If we do have a way of evaluating their effectiveness what is the measurement tool?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: We conducted an evaluation on all our pre-arrival services two years ago, Madam Chair. I am happy to share the results of that evaluation with the committee. It's on our website and we will get that to you.

In particular on CIIP, certainly in the beginning it was a bit more expensive as a program and more a pilot in terms of the individualized service that we were offering, so we set up a separate process called tracking of overseas orientation session graduates, TOSG. What we monitor there is how quickly people are finding a job. We know in this case about 75% of those CIIP graduates find employment in less than 12 months. I think the more significant figure out of the CIIP that we track is how many reported their job was directly aligned or related to their previous work experience. This was a big mandate or *raison d'être* for the program in the first place. That's about 69% who have reported finding work that's related to their experience or their field and 58% reported that their job was directly aligned or related to their education. We think those results are pretty good.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Do I have time?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): You have one-and-a-half minutes.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Yes.

In terms of cost, out of the \$600 million, roughly what is your best guess of the amount that's dedicated to, say, a pre-arrival service in an offshore location?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Overall, what we've spent on pre-arrival services is less than \$20 million to date. We recently conducted a call for proposals for overseas services, where the contracts with those organizations were coming to an end. We're looking to expand our provision of pre-arrival services. The call for proposals is completed. We are assessing the bids that came in under that call for proposals in terms of being able to expand those overseas services to focus on some additional areas, and also to expand the outreach for the program.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Thank you, Mr. Leung.

Mr. Sandhu, you have the floor.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: I come from Surrey, and a lot of refugees settle in Surrey. It's a little more affordable compared to the rest of the Vancouver area. As the city of Surrey has pointed out a number of times to me—I've talked to the councillors and I've talked to a number of refugee families, especially the government-sponsored refugees; we've talked about a family of five coming in—often, government-sponsored refugees come from camps where they may have been for many years. When they arrive here, they have little or nothing at all besides what they're wearing. It is a burden for them when we give them a bill and say, “Okay, before you get here, here's

a bill for your travel costs”. That is before they even have a chance to breathe in this country.

What is the justification for the Government of Canada or the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to give them this bill before they arrive? If we're trying to integrate these government-sponsored refugees, what justification is there for us to give them a bill before they even have a chance to figure out where they've arrived?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, I think it's important to remember that the refugee assistance program provides a number of different supports for refugees as they arrive in Canada. For government-assisted refugees, it also provides income support for that first year, some settlement services, and housing. There are 23 refugee centres across the country that welcome refugees, provide them with an immediate place to stay, and help them integrate into society. There are small loans provided to refugees to cover the cost of travel to Canada. They are repayable loans over a specific period of time. The other parts of the refugee assistance program, such as the income and housing support that's offered for that first year, are not repayable. It's part of the refugee assistance program.

•(1020)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: I still haven't received any justification. Why would the Government of Canada do this? On the one hand you may be giving them assistance in housing, or income assistance; on the other hand you're giving them a bill for their travel here. What is the justification?

What I'm trying to get to is that this provides hardship for refugees that have come here on government assistance. I think it creates an additional burden for them to integrate into society.

I'll move on to my next question.

We've had a number of colleges offer an English as a second language program, which has actually helped young immigrants upgrade their language skills to the level of a university course. I know that program has been cut in my community. Why was that done? Why has the funding for colleges which offered English as a second language, as sort of a bridge into university courses, been cut? I believe it has been moved over to other service providers.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: The Government of Canada resumed settlement services in British Columbia in the fiscal year 2014-15. As part of that provision of settlement services, we conducted a call for proposals in British Columbia to look at what settlement provider organizations were prepared to offer. There were some changes in terms of service providers as they came in. We still provide funding to some colleges in British Columbia for the provision of language services. The province also funds the provision of language services in some areas.

Madam Chair, as has been noted, there were some changes to service provider organizations that happened as a result of that call for proposals.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Those changes have actually resulted in funding cuts to colleges where new immigrants had been able to upgrade their language skills and maybe move on to other universities or colleges. That has been a result. I have talked to the college people who were very affected by that.

My next question is in regard to the funding allocation. As I said, there are many immigrants in my community, refugees who come and settle in Surrey, Abbotsford, Langley, south of the Fraser River. How does the department review funding allocations whether for somewhere in the north, where there are very few new immigrants coming in, or for an area like the one south of the Fraser River, where there is a huge concentration coming in?

How often do you make an adjustment as to where that money is going to be allocated, and how is that done?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, we make adjustments annually regarding where settlement organizations are funded. We have an annual exercise during which we look at where immigrants are settling across the country. I spoke a little bit about the formula we use. It's based on where immigrants are settling in Canada. We have notional allocations for where we're spending the money within a particular province or a particular region. Those get adjusted annually. Also, within a particular province or a particular region we look again at the same things.

Part of this is caught up in where our service provider organization contracts are. As Ms. Primeau explained, some of them are on a three-year basis. Part of our conundrum is wanting to offer stability to service provider organizations for a longer term while maintaining some flexibility for ourselves to be able to adjust the areas in which services are provided according to where immigrants are settling.

This is an annual exercise we undertake to track where those services are needed.

•(1025)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Thank you. Sorry, but time is up.

Mr. Casey, you now have five minutes.

Mr. Sean Casey: In answer to Mr. Sandhu, you referenced loans advanced to immigrants to cover travel costs.

What are the interest and repayment terms of those loans?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: I'll turn that over to Mr. Gionet. I think he has more information than I do on this.

Mr. Jean-Marc Gionet: Madam Chair, the interest rate on the loans is set in accordance with the rate used by the Department of Finance for crown corporations. My information indicates that for 2014 the rate was 1.74%.

Mr. Sean Casey: What are the repayment terms?

Mr. Jean-Marc Gionet: Repayment typically starts within 30 days of arrival, but there can be deferrals depending on the situation. I believe the deferrals can go up to 24 months. Interest-free time periods within that are possible, depending on the situation.

Mr. Sean Casey: Thank you.

I would also like to thank Mr. Menegakis for referencing the Prince Edward Island Association for Newcomers to Canada. Craig Mackie and his team do excellent work there.

From time to time there's frustration with the lack of federal government presence, because if there are inquiries that are not within their mandate, they can direct people to a website or a 1-800

number, but there's no one within the government they can send anyone to.

But make no mistake: the work done by the Prince Edward Island Association for Newcomers to Canada is absolutely top-notch. It's money well spent. Trust me.

There is also some excellent work going on in my province by some other organizations in the settlement area. Study Abroad Canada is one. I'm not sure whether it's funded by the Government of Canada. The PEI Connectors program, which is run through the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce, is another shining example. There is also the work that is done within our two educational institutions—the University of Prince Edward Island and Holland College—which do an outstanding job of attracting foreign students.

You pointed out the success of the provincial nominee program, which has been tremendously successful in getting people to Prince Edward Island, but one of the frustrations we have is that it has been a real challenge to get them to stay. There are a whole bunch of reasons that they leave. The lack of a federal government presence is, in fairness, a small part of that. There are bigger reasons. There's a critical mass in other places. There's a lack of economic opportunities.

Do you track where immigrants come in and where they end up?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Yes, we do. We look at how successful individual areas are in terms of retaining immigrants and we also look at where immigrants are going. If they arrived in Prince Edward Island, for example, and they're not staying in Prince Edward Island, then where are those immigrants going?

Mr. Sean Casey: In our part of the country, as I suppose in others, we have a demographic issue with people living longer and declining birth rates. We also have a seasonal economy and not as many good-paying, year-round jobs. The EI program has had a devastating effect on that. We see an exodus of young talent west to better-paying jobs.

My question for you is, in the course of developing your programs, is regional economic disparity an element in terms of developing the strategy or the delivery?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: I wouldn't say that regional economic disparity is part of how the programs are developed, but I would say that the programs offered by service provider organizations are particularly sensitive to regional needs and to the needs in local economies. I don't know a single service provider organization that doesn't try to work hard with the local employer community. Whether they're offering services around language training or whether it's more direct employment-related services through settlement provider organizations, they're trying to create a network within a community to make sure that those immigrants who have arrived and who are availing themselves of those services have a good link back into that employer community, and that there's a good sense of testing. Many service provider organizations provide mini job fairs and other matching services with employers.

•(1030)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Thank you, Mr. Casey.

Mr. Menegakis, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: I want to touch a bit on refugees as well, since we're discussing it this morning.

As we know, Canada accepts one in ten of the world's resettled refugees. In fact, it's very welcome news that the minister announced at the beginning of January 10,000 additional Syrian refugees and 3,000 additional Iraqi refugees. Canadians are certainly very compassionate people and very welcoming people, and that is in keeping with what is the Canadian way.

I want to talk a little bit about the \$600 million you mentioned for settlement services that everybody can avail themselves of. For the actual resettlement package, if you will, for refugees, are there additional funds for that? Am I correct in saying those funds...? Perhaps you could give us the number. I think it's about \$55 million, but I'd like to hear it from you.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: That's correct, Madam Chair. It's about \$55 million that's spent in refugee assistance programs.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Is that in addition to the \$600 million for settlement funding? It's not included in the \$600 million. Is that correct?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: That's correct.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you very much.

I've heard some good-news stories of how CIC has assisted refugees in connecting with employers. Could you perhaps give us an example of that?

Mr. Ryhan Mansour: Madam Chair, we do have several examples.

As was mentioned, there are some services set aside under the resettlement assistance program that are dedicated to refugees. But the entire bigger envelope of settlement services, the \$600 million, also serves refugees once they're done, and their transition from the resettlement to the settlement services, and those include supports for employment. Actually, refugees are highly represented in our clients under the settlement program. Almost one in five is a refugee.

We have very good examples of programs that are geared to the employment of refugees. I can think of several examples. For instance, there's LEEP, the life and employment enhancement program in Saskatchewan, where refugees who were deemed job ready after getting their necessary language skills level up to a certain level, getting trained for their resumé preparation, and getting connected with employers, were able to get placements into jobs where they could use their skills.

We also have some recent activity that maybe Madam Pateman could speak to where we've been approached by employers who have also been looking to fill some labour shortages they have in low-skilled areas with refugees and have been meeting some very good success recently.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, I'm going to give the remainder of my time to my colleague Mr. Hawn.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you very much.

I have a couple of points and then a couple of questions.

This is *grosso modo*, but every department budgets for expected expenditures and so on. People make a big deal out of money that is lapsed—quote, unquote—at the end of the year, but a lot of government programs like yours, like Veterans Affairs programs, and so on, are demand driven. If the money is not demanded, the money is not spent. The numbers that were tossed out were \$18 million over \$800 million. That's about 2.3%. In my opinion, I think any department that budgets within about 2% or 3% is doing a pretty fine job, so good on you.

Mr. Gionet, the loan terms and so on seem to me to be pretty favourable, so I don't think that in itself is a big issue. Are there provisions for outright forgiveness under certain circumstances?

Mr. Jean-Marc Gionet: Madam Chair, I'm not aware, and I might need to get back to you on that one.

• (1035)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: It looks like you want to say something, Ms. Tapley.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: We'll get back with specific details—

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Okay.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: —but there are circumstances such that we would allow for outright forgiveness. We'll get back to the committee with under what circumstances that could be allowed.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Okay.

I have another short question. One of the popular Internet myths that keeps circulating regularly is about how poorly we treat our seniors compared to how wonderfully we treat our refugees. It conflates the numbers that are one-time grants and monthly income support. Could you give us the numbers for the one-time grant for things like setting up a household and furniture? I think it's \$1,890. Also, I believe the monthly financial support for the first year is \$580. Would you have those numbers?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: That's correct, Madam Chair. That's the simple answer.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I'm asking that just so it's on the record and so the next time I get this thing, which comes around about every year, I can give them the blues and say, "No, here it is."

Thank you. That's all I wanted.

Mr. Sean Casey: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): Madam Mathysen, you may have a few more minutes, if you want to take them.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Again, thank you for the information you've brought to the committee.

There is something I've been thinking about over the last number of years. It has to do with my experience as a teacher. In the early nineties and the mid-nineties, a number of students came here from Bosnia and other places where they had been subjected to things that children should never see. One of the things that I noted in the classroom was the very clear evidence of traumatization. These kids couldn't function and they couldn't tell us why.

In terms of that, since we're seeing so many desperate families and so many affected children coming to Canada now, whether it's from Syria or Africa, are there services available for crisis intervention for these traumatized human beings so they can be successful in terms of their integration and resettlement?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Madam Chair, I should say that we work in close partnership with provinces and territories on settlement and integration programming. Although the federal government provides about \$600 million outside of Quebec, provinces and territories also provide direct supports.

The provincial and territorial indirect supports, through education and through health, are significant. One of the programs I will talk about that we're quite proud of is SWIS, the settlement workers in schools program. We have settlement workers in the schools to catch the parents, so to speak. They provide integration and settlement supports not only to students in the school, but also to their parents as a friendlier interface that comes up with the school system and with immigrant parents in some cases. It's to help connect the needs of students and the needs of those parents to settlement provider organizations, but also to provincial and territorial supports through the health care system and through other social services.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: How long has that program been in place?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: SWIS? It depends on what part of the country it is, but that program has been in place in one form or another since the 1990s, since 1999.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: That would explain what I was seeing and the problem in the mid-nineties.

I believe Mr. Sandhu has a question.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: You mentioned there are a number of places where the immigrants or refugees are able to access childminding spaces. Is that correct?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: That's correct. We provide childminding services with a number of our different settlement services. For language training, or for employment-related services, not in all cases, but in many cases we provide childminding services.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Does it help the new immigrants to have this service available?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: When we looked at our programs, we identified what the barriers were. Madam Chair, the committee has identified some of these as well. One barrier that had a particular effect on immigrant women was that they couldn't come to language training or other settlement services because they were busy providing child care. The provision of childminding services in conjunction with the other settlement services lets a greater proportion of immigrant women come in and avail themselves of those services.

● (1040)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Would that barrier still be there when they are looking for jobs outside?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe): I'm sorry to interrupt you.

Thank you, Madam Tapley, and your colleagues, for your contribution to this study on promoting economic prosperity through settlement services.

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, the bells are reminding us of our duty to go vote. Therefore, I now adjourn the meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.

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