



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

CIMM • NUMBER 039 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, February 26, 2015

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Chair

Mr. David Tilson

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)): This is the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, and today we are studying the topic of promoting economic prosperity through settlement services.

We have three sets of guests, although I see four name tags, but that'll all come clear eventually.

We have from Colleges and Institutes Canada, Denise Amyot, president and chief executive officer; and Cynthia Murphy, director of the Canadian immigrant integration program.

We have a representative from the London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, Ms. Nooralhoda Hussein, who is project coordinator.

From the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, we have Mohamed Al-Adeimi, coordinator of newcomer settlement services.

Mr. McCallum.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to bring to the attention of the committee a document that I received, which has a bearing on this study. It's not a committee document, so it is not protected by privilege, but the document appears to be a Conservative document which refers to the risk of this study in terms of "showcasing to our base that we are spending almost a billion dollars a year on settlement". It also predetermines, it would appear, the conclusions to this study before we hear the witnesses.

I'd like to submit this document to the clerk for translation and distribution, but if there is unanimous consent, I could distribute it in English only right now.

The Chair: I have no idea. I've never heard of or seen such a document, Mr. McCallum. Personally, I haven't seen such a document.

Hon. John McCallum: No, I'm not suggesting that you have. That's why I'm offering to distribute it, so that you can see it.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent on this?

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): No.

The Chair: There doesn't appear to be unanimous consent. I would suggest, Mr. McCallum, that you give it to the clerk for translation and then we'll talk about it another time.

Hon. John McCallum: That's a good idea.

The Chair: Ms. Amyot or Ms. Murphy, I don't know which one of you is going to be addressing us, but you will have up to eight minutes to make a presentation. Then we'll go to the other witnesses, and then there'll be questions from the committee.

Ms. Amyot

Ms. Denise Amyot (President and Chief Executive Officer, Colleges and Institutes Canada): Mr. Chair, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

As you know, we all have a role to play in growing Canada's economy and contributing to our society, whether we are new immigrants, newcomers, or people whose families have been here for many generations, like mine, who has been here for 400 years.

[Translation]

Good morning to all of the members of the committee.

We are here today because we all know the importance of integrating immigrants into our society. It is not just a "nice to have" but a must for Canada.

[English]

As the president of Colleges and Institutes Canada, Canada's largest national association of Canadian colleges and institutes, and the only one with campuses from coast to coast to coast, I have the privilege of seeing first-hand the amazing work that many of our 135 member institutions do to support immigration integration at 1,000 campuses across the country. From my many conversations with our members, I'm going to share with you three key areas in which I believe Canada should invest.

[Translation]

First, we have to develop a portrait of labour market information, both national and local, of pre-arrival settlement services for immigrants, and permanent funding for labour market bridging programs is needed.

[English]

Ms. Denise Amyot: Let me tell you why. It's a bit like a sandwich, if you may allow me to use this comparison.

We'll pretend the first slice of bread represents labour market information. It's the foundation. If potential immigrants are going to be scored against their ability to fill a need in the Canadian economy, then we need to have an accurate picture of the current, and more importantly, future labour market need. Otherwise, how do we know we are recruiting the right people for the right opportunities?

Then we need our sandwich filling: a comprehensive set of pre-arrival settlement services that allow immigrants to access the information and the support they need to prepare for labour market access before they arrive in the country.

Finally, we need to finish our sandwich by making sure that when immigrants arrive in Canada, they can access bridging programs that provide appropriate training and support to further accelerate their integration into the Canadian labour force.

Let me focus on labour market information. Many immigrants come to Canada with and because they have skills that are needed within the Canadian context. But many do not have an accurate national portrait of today's labour market needs, nor do we have predictive labour market information to support decisions on the education and training needed. The need for accurate labour market information is a major preoccupation for the 37 members of our industry college coalition, a group of industry leaders who have joined together with our association to address areas of shared concern like labour market information. As a result, we're asking the Government of Canada, through Employment and Social Development Canada and in partnership with Statistics Canada, to improve labour market information, both on the supply and demand sides.

The second part of the sandwich you remember is the filling. This means giving prospective immigrants a head start before they arrive in Canada through pre-arrival settlement services. Our association, Colleges and Institutes Canada, has been administering the Canadian immigrant integration program since 2007, funded by the Government of Canada. CIIP is a groundbreaking program, which arms prospective immigrants with the right information tools and Canadian contacts before they leave home.

As a result of this intervention, newcomers are far better equipped to find work that reflects their skills and education, rather than settling for survival jobs, as is often the case. I have personally visited one of our CIIP offices in India, and I can tell you that the program is making a huge difference in the lives of newcomers. Through these services, clients begin to realize all of the pre-arrival steps they can take to maximize their employment success in Canada, whether it is contact with regulatory bodies to kick-start their licensure process; contact with colleges for educational upgrading and bridging programs; participating in pre-arrival initiatives, such as online workshops, occupation-specific webinars, exam invigilations, mentorships and internship preparation; registration with employment support organizations; or even contacting immigrant-serving organizations for settlement support. After participating in CIIP services, 96% of clients say they are committed to taking pre-arrival action.

What does it look like? In fact, it's a free service offered in person and online, in both English and French. Very few countries in the world offer something like that. First, clients participate in a big group orientation session that focuses on exploring job prospects. Newcomers are not only better informed, but they know where their occupation is in demand, thus improving job readiness by identifying challenges and risk-mitigation strategies, learning about Canadian job search strategies, and strengthening job retention through greater awareness of culture shock, legal rights, and workplace norms.

Second, they participate in a one-on-one planning session, which results in a comprehensive action plan, with employment and settlement steps to be taken pre- and post-arrival in Canada.

● (0855)

The Chair: You have one minute left, Ms. Amyot.

Ms. Denise Amyot: Okay. Maybe I'll tell you about the results.

CIIP has served around 30,000 prospective immigrants. Of those, 47% were employed within three months of arrival in Canada, with 63% of them working in their fields. We're very grateful to the Government of Canada for renewing CIIP for two additional years. Instead of having the program in three main countries, when we went from three to 25, it will now be worldwide service delivery.

I do have information on the two other parts of the sandwich. I would be pleased to convey them to you later on.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation, Ms. Amyot.

The second presenter is Ms. Hussein from the London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership.

Welcome to the committee. You have up to eight minutes.

Ms. Nooralhoda Hussein (Project Coordinator, London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership): Thank you very much for the opportunity.

My name is Nooralhoda Hussein, but I usually go by Huda. I have always gone by the name Huda, just to make it easier.

I am here today to represent the London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, which is really funded by the government through Citizenship and Immigration Canada. We have been funded since 2009 to become a body of planning for the successful integration of immigrants. I'll just give you some of the background of what we do, some of the demographics in London and Middlesex, and what our goal is in trying to support the economic prosperity of Canadians.

As I said, we have been funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada since 2009. We are a community collaborative initiative that supports and strengthens initiative by establishing stronger linkages between the sectors. We also support the role of settlement services. We are one of 35 LIPs, again funded by CIC, throughout Ontario and the model has now been taken outside Ontario to Alberta, B.C., Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia.

One of our co-chairs is the City of London. It is very important to have the local government involved in the project itself. That gives us credibility; that gives us neutrality; that gives us the success that we are seeing in London and Middlesex.

Our purpose is a collaborative framework to facilitate the successful integration by looking at the issues together with the community, and to build stronger and healthier communities.

The statistics show that one in five Londoners is or has been an immigrant to Canada. As per Statistics Canada, this percentage will grow given the aging population and declining birth rates. The need to assist immigrants in a successful integration is of utmost importance. Our country receives about 250,000 immigrants every year, so the services are still needed.

What's our role in economic prosperity? We play an important role in creating the infrastructure to support the economic prosperity of the immigrants.

How do we do this? We consult and connect with system partners and stakeholders to identify gaps and strategies in order to facilitate the successful integration of immigrants. We support better coordination of services across multiple sectors and within mainstream organizations. We find local solutions to overcome issues that impede the successful integration of immigrants. We create awareness among stakeholders and immigrants. We share information on job opportunities and emerging issues with newcomers and ethnic communities.

I'll give an example of what we do at the settlement sub-council. We have six sub-councils. One of the sub-councils is the settlement sub-council. We realize that when immigrants come, they are given the information in the first three months and they are overwhelmed. We have tried to coordinate with the LINC program, the language instruction program for newcomers, the work information on different issues as per the need of immigrants. If their need is on health issues, we coordinate with the health unit to come and talk about health issues and so forth.

This has become a very successful body, which is called the family settlement collaborative. Information is power and we believe that if information is given at the right time and when needed, people will become successful.

We also provide the framework to facilitate collaboration to develop community-based strategy plans. We recognize that changes can be made through engaging all sectors, which includes the three levels of government; therefore, we engage them for better outcomes for immigrants. We initiate discussions on systemic changes. We do know that systemic changes take time—it's like moving big ships—so we try to change slowly.

For example, we have realized that classroom demographics have changed. We no longer have one particular ethnic group; we have different ethnic groups, different cultures, different languages.

We have collaborated with the faculty of education at London's Western University. We have also developed a position paper that we have submitted to the education ministry and the ministry of universities and colleges.

We're trying to underline for the teachers who are coming to teach the children that the classroom demographics have changed. What can we do as a community to help the teachers be equipped with the information they need in the new classroom?

● (0900)

For example, we have found that housing challenges are facing the immigrants. What can we do as a community? We partnered with the City of London to see how we can engage the two stakeholders, the landlords and the tenants, at the same time so that everyone understands the issues and they can work together.

These are small systemic changes that we at the London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership have tried to move on.

Our partners are many. We do have the three levels of government on the council. We also have the big systems, such as the institutions, the school boards, the health unit, and the hospitals.

In London we have a number of projects that have been successful in the integration of immigrants. For example, my colleague mentioned the CIIP through Skills International. We do that program. It is very important that we have some programs inside and outside to prepare the immigrants.

In conclusion, I would like to say that LMLIP is an indirect settlement service, and it has a role to play in creating the economic prosperity of the immigrants. We are grateful to have had the funding so far from CIC, and continued funding will strengthen our building capacity and our support to the settlement services.

We are driven mostly by 100-plus volunteers. We believe that the London and Middlesex communities are working differently, with a focus on successful integration of the immigrants in our midst. Partnerships have been established to maximize resources.

We are hopeful that we'll continue to receive the necessary funds to enable our community to plan and find strategic ways to support the economic prosperity of the immigrants. We do understand that successful settlement services lead to retention and to economic prosperity. It's important to consider the holistic settlement needs of individuals, which include families.

Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation, Ms. Hussein.

Finally we have, from the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, Mr. Al-Adeimi. Welcome to the committee, sir.

Mr. Mohamed Al-Adeimi (Coordinator, Newcomer Settlement Services, South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre): Thank you, Mr. Chair and committee members.

My name is Mohamed Al-Adeimi, and on a daily basis I coordinate the settlement services at the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre.

At the same time, with regard to the issues of immigrants and the complexity of serving immigrants, and as my colleague Nooralhoda has said, I also chair the settlement sub-council of the London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership. We coordinate that very well thanks to the opportunity which is made available to us through the funding of Citizenship and Immigration. As we get into the issues, we have to work directly with other organizations. I'm also a member of the advisory committee for the RBC Centre for At-Risk Children and Families at the London Health Sciences Centre.

I'm also a member of a pilot project in London on forming family centres serving all residents of London in their neighbourhoods. This project is happening through the city as a pilot.

London is always looked upon as a city where you go if you want to test any object. As the story goes, when McDonald's wanted to bring their restaurant here, they started in London, Ontario. We often see pilot projects started in London. If they are successful there, they could be successful anywhere.

I also serve as a member of the collaborative service teams of these different family centres.

All that is to say it is very important to look at the issues of immigrants from the holistic point of view of the needs of immigrants, which are very complex, as well as the time of the information.

I have a PowerPoint presentation, but I'll try to summarize it because it has not been translated and therefore, I cannot show it.

I will start talking about who we are and then I will talk a little bit about implementing the Citizenship and Immigration programs and the accountability of settlement services. Then I'll conclude by giving a few notes.

The South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre is the biggest centre in the City of London. It has been there for 30 years, and has been serving immigrants as well as residents. Our mission is to operate as a family, child, and youth community enrichment centre. The centre supports and fosters the development of community-based and community-driven projects that nurture and enhance a healthy quality of life for residents of London.

From the very beginning, when the community started settling in London, and throughout the years, they looked at having a place where all their children, families, and everyone could be.

In 2007, we were recognized as one of the settlement agencies by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. What a wonderful place to integrate newcomers into the community, and not by building a silo kind of a centre, separate from settlement agencies. What we provide at the centre is a series of initiatives for engaging residents in their community from age zero until they're seniors.

● (0905)

In terms of the majority, as things have changed, as the demography of the city of London has changed, in our area especially the percentage of newcomers is the highest when compared with other parts of the city and with many medium-sized cities in Ontario as well.

We have a youth council that engages in, plans, and directs their activities into the areas and issues that they are interested in. We integrate newcomer youth within the youth centre. As well, we have the early education centre that supports families who have children below the age of six. Health Canada is a major funder in this project. We coordinate this project through the City of London. As well, we have programs and services for adults and seniors. The majority of the adults and seniors are immigrants as well.

Being a community centre that's driven based on the needs of immigrants, we have a community development approach to engage volunteers. Many individuals on a daily basis support the residents as volunteers. As well, knowing that the need is there for emergency services, we do also have other emergency services. Over 85 programs and services are being put under one roof in order to provide holistic and comprehensive settlement services for newcomers. This is one of the best practices we have shared across the board in Ontario. It's wonderful to have a place for all members of the family, irrespective of whether they have successfully secured a job or not. We see newcomers who have secured a job and who are not settled. They are the ones who are in a very bad situation and won't be integrated easily into the community.

Through our history of 30 years of collaboration and partnership with the community, we do see that it's not enough that a person gets a job. It's important that a person feels that his children are safe, that his family gets the support they need, that they have a place where they can spend their recreational time, a place where they can feel at home, a place that makes them think, "This is my community. I belong here. I am part of it."

This is the way we deliver our best practices in services at the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre.

● (0910)

The Chair: Perhaps you could wind up, sir.

Mr. Mohamed Al-Adeimi: The services we provide through Citizenship and Immigration Canada are now generally through the immigration contribution agreement reporting environment. That is another very important tool we have that CIC has put together. It covers so many areas. Whenever there is a contact between a newcomer and a settlement worker, there is an assessment of the needs of the individual related to trying to know what their opinion is or whether they know much about life in Canada, their community, the government, and working in Canada, and whether they know the education system.

All of their needs are looked at, and accordingly, they are provided with accurate information and referral. This is done by sharing settlement plans with the newcomers and—

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Mohamed Al-Adeimi: All right.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I'm directed by the committee to set a time, and I have to move on to the next stage of the committee, which is a dialogue between members of the committee and you.

We will start off with Mr. Menegakis.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To our witnesses, thank you for appearing before us today and for your testimony. It's very important for us to hear from you as we embark on this very important study. As you know, our government has tripled settlement funding from under \$200 million per year to up to \$600 million now, not including an additional some \$55 million for refugee resettlement. It's important for us to meet with you, our partners out in the field, to get feedback from you on what you see is working right and what you see perhaps needs improvement.

I'll start today by asking you a question, Madam Amyot, if I may, with regard to your efforts at Colleges and Institutes Canada. I know that you work closely with CIC. Can you tell us how your relationship is working with the CIC and how that is assisting and helping you in reaching your clients?

Ms. Denise Amyot: We meet on a regular basis, and whenever there is an issue such as a new policy or new regulations that are being put in place, we make sure that we ask our members what the impact of it could or will be. We have very good relationships and we're very proud of that.

If I may, I will flag a new issue that just emerged last Thursday, as this is a good opportunity. We just found out that there are new fees right now associated with international mobility programs. Some of our members contacted us immediately and said it would create an issue for students to find an internship for the summer, those who are international co-op students or on youth exchange programs, because the students will be asked to pay \$150 and the employers will be asked to pay \$230. We believe that these fees may deter both students and employers from students' having the chance to work for the summer or for a semester in Canada.

We would appreciate whatever you could do to alleviate this or to make an exception for universities, as you rightly did recently with the temporary foreign worker program. If there could be an exception made for those students and for the employers who would accept those students, it would be much appreciated. This is something we contacted CIC about immediately this week, and we're waiting to hear from them, but whatever help you as members of Parliament could provide to us would be much appreciated.

• (0915)

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

Obviously this will dovetail into the students. I read on your website that your organization leads creative marketing campaigns and establishes programs and tools that make it easier for colleges to recruit more international students and for students to obtain their student visas on time. That's a very important and key factor. Obviously, we need to get the students here, and expediting the visa process is always a priority of ours.

Our government knows that international students are essentially contributing to economic jobs and growth in Canada. There's a huge impact on the economy in having the volume of international students that we have here. In fact, our government welcomed a record number of international students last year.

Can you expand on how your organization works with international students?

Ms. Denise Amyot: Yes, absolutely.

As you know, the government wants to double the number of international students. We are on the right road to make it happen, because now we have 300,000 students, and I'm very pleased to say that we have a number of those who are students coming into colleges, whether for diploma certificates or degrees or post-graduate diplomas. We organize recruitment campaigns where we go with different colleges across the country that are interested and have room to accommodate and receive international students. We have websites. We use social media.

We also work with CIC to accelerate the process for visas through a program that is specific to colleges, which is called SPP, student partners program, a special program. We are very pleased about that. We have it for India, for example, and for China. We are looking at doing it for other countries right now.

If I may, I will talk about express entry because you are giving me a great opportunity to talk about it. We really appreciate the new platform that is created by express entry, because it's like a just-in-time approach. We anticipate that due to language, age, education, and experience requirements, international student graduates will be able to integrate into Canada in an easier way.

That said, I also want to say there have been some questions brought forward by some of our colleges. They say it could be difficult for college graduates to obtain job offers supported by labour market information assessments, and because of that they would not be competitive and may be unable to attain permanent residency. So CIC—as I told you, we have a good relationship with them—told us they will monitor the process. They have asked us to also monitor the process and let them know if there are any issues that arise so they can modify the policy accordingly.

I will flag one thing, though. Right now, when you look at the express entry process, there are more points if you are a university graduate than if you are a college graduate. Sometimes in our country, because of the need for technologists or technicians in some specific areas, it would be more for college students, so if we could equilibrate, balance, have the same number of points given to college students as are given to university students, we would contribute even further to the economy of the country.

• (0920)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Amyot.

Ms. Mathyssen is next.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you so much for being here. We appreciate the expertise, because this study is very important to future planning and we simply have to get it right.

I'm just going to throw out questions. Perhaps my questions will be more in line with Madam Hussein and Mr. Al-Adeimi's expertise, but, Madam Amyot, if you would like to interject as well, that would be fine.

I'll start with you, Nooralhoda. You talked about how important it is that we welcome refugees and that they are going to make an incredible difference in terms of the kind of society that we're able to build. In that regard, I'm wondering about the folks who arrive at your agency. One thing I heard last weekend at a meeting was that the new rules with regard to the amount of time that you're here impacting your citizenship is of concern. For example, it used to be 1,095 days out of 1,460 or three years out of four years that—

The Chair: Excuse me. I'll just stop the clock for a minute.

I'm sorry, Ms. Mathysen, but they are having trouble hearing what you're saying.

Okay, you're back on.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was at a meeting this past weekend, and there was concern about the change in rules regarding time being present in Canada. It was three of four years, and now it's four of six.

More than one of the people in the room said that the difficulty is—and CIC has identified this—that when people come, they don't have Canadian work experience, and therefore they can't get a job. Without a job, they can't get that experience.

One individual had settled his family here. They were looking, as Mr. Al-Adeimi said, for a safe and secure place, and he was very happy with that. But he has to travel back to their place of origin in order to find work. He has to feed his family. He has to pay his mortgage or his rent, and he's very upset about that.

Are you hearing about that catch-22 with regard to people who are desperately looking for work and who need to support their families?

Mr. Mohamed Al-Adeimi: That's a good question. A lot of changes have taken place in the past few years with regard to Citizenship and Immigration programs and services.

Individuals who came here before those changes had their own plans and thoughts about how they could be mobile. Mobility is important these days for immigrants looking for opportunities.

The irony of the whole thing is that the person has chosen a certain community, and has chosen Canada as his or her country. The expectation is that this person will stay.

On a daily basis we are faced with newcomers. They knock on our doors and talk a lot about their difficulties whether they're about getting jobs or settling in or moving. We also see the other areas. People come here and want to leave their families here, and then go and continue. This is put on the shoulders of front-line workers, settlement workers. They get many people asking about the changes and what's happening.

We try to align most of this information we provide them with the changes that are happening, and try to give them accurate information. We have done that throughout the years as people have heard from friends and families and so on, and they have done a lot of things that are not as per the requirements they have signed up for in order to migrate here.

We have worked with the immigrant communities and have been very much involved in the London community in this regard, in

order to make them understand that they should move from friends' and families' inaccurate information to the accurate and timely information they can get from CIC settlement agencies.

Getting accurate information is very important. I look at it as something that definitely has an impact on the prosperity of individuals. Thank you for doing that, and for meeting with the communities and trying to listen to them.

We see this on a daily basis. Most of the burden of agony and feelings of frustration is absorbed by the settlement workers. They are very creative and very passionate workers who throughout the years have been well trained, and, through their training, they are able to provide accurate information and referrals.

I hope this definitely is something that we.... It's on an individual basis, and we cannot talk about it.

● (0925)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: One of the issues that keeps coming up in my office over and over are the roadblocks to family reunification.

Is that something that you see in your work? What's the impact on the economy of not being able to bring family members over?

Mr. Mohamed Al-Adeimi: Definitely, Canada is one of the countries that always helps people unify their families.

I remember once when I was travelling I saw a person who worked in Europe. We were going to attend a conference. He told me he was going to immigrate to Canada because he'd be able to bring his family. This assists in having well-settled individuals who are going to succeed. Our communities will be able to retain newcomers if they are able to unite with their families and are able to work with peace of mind.

Keep in mind that a lot of individuals, even high school students whose children come from Korea and different places, expect that once their children succeed here, they will be able to bring their families for sure.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Mr. McCallum, you have up to five minutes, sir.

Hon. John McCallum: Thank you.

Thank you to the witnesses for being with us.

I'd like to ask Ms. Amyot questions about international students and permanent residents. I think we would all agree that, particularly with our aging population, we need immigrants and these international students are almost the perfect candidates. They're young, they're educated, they have Canadian experience, and other countries are in competition for them.

My contention would be that in at least three areas the government has inhibited this. First, it has inhibited this by removing their 50% credit for time in Canada to become a citizen. Second, in terms of the job market, they now require a labour market impact assessment, LMIA, in some cases, to get a job, whereas they didn't before. Sometimes the firm might not think it was worth it to hire a foreign student now that they have this additional impediment. Third, the government has removed certain occupational classes as being eligible to become permanent residents. In certain cases students have come here and invested money. They've invested maybe two or three years of study in Canada with the hope of becoming a permanent resident on the basis of a specific occupation, and then all of a sudden they're told that occupation is no longer eligible. I would think we're shooting ourselves in the foot in these areas.

I would ask you to comment on anything you wish. In particular, on the question of the changes in occupation, would it not be fair and appropriate to have some sort of grandfathering system so if you change the occupations that are eligible that would be for the future? For those who have already spent some time in Canada and invested their time and money on this path for them suddenly to be deprived of that seems very unfair.

● (0930)

Ms. Denise Amyot: Definitely it would be good if the students could be grandfathered.

The other thing I want to mention is the success that we have seen so far. There are about 3 out of 10 students who decide to stay. More and more students want to come to stay. Before they couldn't mention it, but now it is recognized that they can say it and it won't be held against them.

I talked earlier about two of the issues that we see right now. One, which we're not sure will have a negative impact, is express entry. It's very positive with respect to the approach, but we are concerned that the number of points is different for college students versus university students, when in fact some of those college students are the ones we need in the job market. That's one of the areas where we believe there could be a change, and it could be a very positive change, and we would all benefit.

Of course, there is this new fee for employers and students that just emerged last week, which our members have found out about. We believe that this could be detrimental to the students. Obviously, there are some employers who will say, "Look, I'm used to taking so many students every semester." They may rethink their willingness to take those students, and those students need the job experience in Canada in order to have more points to come.

I believe that with the relationship we have with Citizenship and Immigration they will take that into account, because this is very new. We believe that there could be a change in that. We are asking that they change this in order to accommodate those students and those employers, because those employers also need those students.

Hon. John McCallum: You did say you think the people whose occupations have been eliminated should be grandfathered. In the colleges that you represent, have you found this to be an issue with a large number of students?

Ms. Denise Amyot: I don't have the data specifically for across the country per occupation, but this is certainly a comment that we

have heard by different members. You see, we also have what we call the bridging program. I don't know how familiar the committee is with the bridging program.

The Chair: If you can be very brief. We're way over time, so just conclude.

Ms. Denise Amyot: Okay.

The bridging program is really to help fill the gaps in the competencies of the people who arrive in Canada. Colleges are quite active in helping the people who have some credentials from another country and then they need to have some cross-cultural programs and some adaptations in their training, and so on. They take this for periods that vary from 12 weeks to a year. This has been very successful.

● (0935)

Hon. John McCallum: Thank you.

Ms. Denise Amyot: Sorry.

Hon. John McCallum: Thank you for your indulgence.

The Chair: Don't be sorry, we just have a clock to fight here, that's all.

Mr. Leung.

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): I wish to direct my questions to Madam Amyot regarding the Canadian immigrant integration program. When I first came to Canada back in the late sixties, there was no such program. There were actually no resettlement services at all. I notice that your program was initially launched as a pilot project in 2007, and obviously it's very successful.

I need you to address four issues.

First, you talked about the pre-arrival service in the country of origin. How do you move your resources to the right country? The immigration pattern has changed over the last decade or so, or will change even as we look into the future.

Second, I'd like to know what is either a quantitative or qualitative measuring tool that you use to ensure that this program is indeed achieving the successes you want.

Third, I'd like you to elaborate on or discuss what your criteria for successful economic integration are, and how long you track it.

Those are my three questions.

The Chair: Can anybody tell me anything?

Ms. Denise Amyot: I heard three questions. You said you had four, and I'm not sure if I missed the fourth one.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: That has to do with the measurement of successful integration.

Ms. Denise Amyot: With respect to pre-arrival services, we obviously have offices where a majority of immigrants are located. We also offer services online and our employees also go to offer the services that are needed, for example, in the United Arab Emirates, the UAE, or they would go to another country to offer it.

Right now we have three permanent offices, one in India, one in the Philippines, and one in China, which are the places we have the most immigrants from.

To answer your questions and to be quick also with quantitative and qualitative measurements, one of the things we do is a survey of the level of satisfaction of the people who participate in our sessions. We also measure the number of people who find jobs within how many months and if it was a job in their field. The government has also done third party assessments for those immigrants to find out if they have found jobs and if it was in a different field. We're very pleased with the results and that's why they have given us two additional years.

We started with a pilot, which was an idea of one of our staff, because like you, she had heard about the taxi drivers who are engineers and doctors and are now janitors and wanted to change this. We are very pleased with the track record.

We track for a year ourselves but we know that CIC tracks for a longer period. Unfortunately, I don't have those data, but I believe that if they have believed in this program since 2007, it's because the results were there to show how successful it was. I don't know how many times I would take a taxi and would talk about that program, because in a way, I use the taxi drivers to share the good news. Each time they say they wish they had known that and they ask if it's too late. I tell them that unfortunately it is too late but they should share it with their family back home. Each time they ask me for more information, which is very good.

The fact that the government has recently opened it to all classes of immigrants I think is a great step forward.

• (0940)

Mr. Chungsen Leung: I'm sure we all use taxi drivers, barbers, and hairdressers as our grassroots information source.

Let me also address the question in another way. Comparing the pre-arrival services and the in-Canada services, what is the advantage of the pre-arrival service? Why is this so important for successful economic integration?

Ms. Denise Amyot: It is successful for a number of reasons. I would say we need to increase it.

The reason for that is you can start the process of licensing, of accreditation, to know that they may need to take another course, and immediately before they get here put them in contact with settlement agencies, and colleges and universities where they could get some more credits if they need them to have their equivalency. So instead of beginning that process once they are here and losing precious time, we do it when they are there. Sometimes it even influences where they decide to go to establish themselves, because they realize that in Alberta or Newfoundland or Saskatchewan, there are many jobs they could do. They see that the job prospects are better and more appropriate for their credentials or expertise. Sometimes it modifies the plan.

The other thing that is very important which I haven't mentioned is it is not only good for the immigrant but it's good for their entire family who are 18 years and over. It helps the spouse. It helps the children. It becomes a family affair, if you will, where you help the entire family to get settled in the country.

The Chair: Thank you.

I know you think I'm rude for cutting you off, but I have a clock.

Ms. Denise Amyot: I'm a passionate individual, as you can see.

The Chair: I appreciate that.

Madam Blanchette-Lamothe has about two minutes.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Great.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hussein, we know that certain immigrant groups encounter more difficulties than others when it comes to integrating the workplace. I am thinking of women, among others, perhaps in part because there are many of them in the sponsorship category. They come here to be with their husbands.

According to your experience in the field, what can we put in place to meet the particular needs of female newcomers, so as to help them to join the labour force if that is what they want to do?

[*English*]

Ms. Nooralhoda Hussein: Through you, Mr. Chair, I would like to reply to the member.

That's a good question regarding the women. We do see that women have that inability to work at the same time as their husbands are working.

In London, through the London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership working with the settlement services and the other key players—when talk about the key players, we talk about the system, about employment agencies, educational institutions. We bring them together and we talk about this issue.

We came up with some ideas, not specifically to the women, but in general to the immigrant communities. What are the barriers that impede the immigrants from finding employment? With something like soft skills, for example, which is very small—we take it for granted here—we find that could be a barrier in getting or retaining a job. As a community, we came up with that idea that this is what is impeding the women from getting the work, or impeding the immigrant in general.

We try to work with the settlement services and with employment agencies, and we have created a kind of chart of what you need to get a job, a kind of checklist: I need to do a resume. How do you do a resume? A resume is different from place to place. Where I come from, it's the degree that takes you to employment, but it's different here. There are so many people who come from those kinds of backgrounds.

We try to work with the community, and the immigrants themselves are part of that counsel. They tell us what the problems are and we tell them that we will work together to find the solution for them. By working with the different agencies, we can come up with some plans of how to improve their job search.

• (0945)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Hussein.

I know we could easily go on for another hour. You've created a lot of interest with our colleagues here, but I'm afraid that our time has expired.

Thank you very much for coming.

I want to thank the four of you for taking the time to spend this hour with us to give us your thoughts on this topic. It will be very helpful for our report.

This meeting is adjourned.

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