



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

CIMM • NUMBER 042 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, March 26, 2015

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Chair

Mr. David Tilson

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•(0855)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)): We'll call the meeting to order. It's Thursday March 26, and this is the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. We are studying promoting economic prosperity through settlement services.

I'd like all the witnesses from both panels to be present. We have a bit of a problem. We've been advised that there may be a vote, in which case our committee would have to rise. The bells will start at 10 o'clock, which means we will lose an hour if all this takes place. The committee has agreed that we will hear from all witnesses, and there should be five of you, I think. Yes, there are five. If we have time after that, we will ask questions.

On behalf of the committee, I'd like to welcome you and thank you for coming to put forward your perspective and help us with preparing a report. I'll just call the witnesses in order.

We have Debbie Douglas, who is the executive director of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants.

Ms. Douglas, thank you for coming. You have up to eight minutes to make a presentation.

Ms. Debbie Douglas (Executive Director, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)): Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's good to be back here to talk about settlement services with you.

As you know, we are the provincial council here in Ontario for agencies working with immigrants and refugees. Our member agencies provide a range of services, including settlement, language training, employment, skills training, health and mental health, legal, housing, violence prevention, family counselling, and specialized services for women, youth, seniors, lesbian, gay, trans, and intersex folk, as well as people with disabilities. With respect to economic integration, they support clients with credentials recognition, occupational language training, bridging, apprenticeship, job search, job development and employer engagement, mentoring, internship, entrepreneurship, professional networking, and ongoing support for job retention and career advancement.

Less than half of our member agencies receive funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The majority of services related to economic integration are funded by the provincial government and other sources of funding, and supported by hundreds of volunteers.

OCASI's 2012 study "Making Ontario Home", based on a survey of over 2,500 newcomers to Ontario, found that employment is the number one challenge for immigrants. Much has been written about the growth of precarious jobs in Canada and the impact on Canadian workers, especially young workers. The 2013 study "It's More Than Poverty" showed that immigrants are overrepresented in precarious jobs, which also means they are under-represented in those that allow access to EI programs and other income security programs. It found that barely 25% of immigrants are employed in secure jobs upon arrival, and that for many it can take more than 10 years to find permanent, full-time employment, compared to non-immigrants. The report also noted that temporary immigration tended to place workers in precarious employment.

The report "The Colour Coded Labour Market By The Numbers" found that the 2008 recession widened the gap between the labour market experience of both established and recent immigrants and that of the Canadian born, and that racialized immigrants, or immigrants of colour, were the most affected. This study is based on the 2011 voluntary national household survey and notes that the non-response bias by some groups has affected data quality. Without the mandatory long form census, we will continue to risk leaving out certain vulnerable populations when we look at issues like the economic integration of immigrants.

These findings tell us that economic integration requires many interventions, including regulatory bodies to improve accreditation practices; employers to improve hiring and retention practices; government to introduce incentives for employers through our tax system, with conditions such as retention for a specific amount of time; and immigrant and refugee serving agencies to engage employers and to provide the necessary employment support, just as immigrants are expected to improve their skills where and when necessary.

In preparing for this presentation, I canvassed some of our OCASI member agencies for their insights on supporting economic integration through settlement services, and these are a few of the things they had to say.

They said that CIC-funded settlement services are an important anchor for settlement and integration, and work well to allow immigrants and refugees to access what they need. The pre-arrival services are a useful component for most immigrants arriving through express entry. However, settlement needs become concrete after arrival and while settling in the new community, and can shift depending on the circumstances that arise from the settlement process. They also said that employment is a critical aspect of settlement. However, having a job, even a good job, doesn't mean that all settlement needs have been met. Other supports are needed to maintain employment, including job integration, health and mental health, and the settlement needs of the accompanying family members. Those who arrive in Canada with a job offer will also face these challenges and will need support.

Family reunification is an important element that contributes to better economic integration, and family separation can negatively affect job search and retention. Without family, we are creating a lonely world, and that will affect integration. The message I want to leave here is that economic success is not possible without social integration. Of course, when we look at immigrants' economic integration, we must pay attention to issues of discrimination, prejudice, intolerance, and racism in the labour market and in the community, and that affects labour market entry and job retention.

I have a few recommendations for you, but before I go there, I want to stress that francophone immigrants face major challenges in trying to get a job in primarily anglo markets like our provinces outside of Quebec. A recent joint study by OCASI and FrancoQueer, which is a provincial group concerned with the social, legal, and economic well-being of francophone LGBTI communities, including immigrants and refugees, highlights the complex challenges of being a new immigrant, racialized, and from a sexual minority, with the primary challenge being finding employment and housing.

● (0900)

The introduction of express entry and speculation about the potential demographic shift has dominated every sector of discussion, as you can imagine, but some things will remain the same.

The new cohort of immigrants and their families will continue to need some degree of support to settle and integrate into their new life. Immigrant-serving organizations are best positioned to serve those needs, given their years of service experience, credibility in the community, and strong and enduring relationships with the multiplicity of stakeholders including governments, employers, educational institutions, public institutions, and communities.

Our recommendations include the following:

CIC-funded settlement services are important and needed. Ideally they should be delivered seamlessly together with employment services, and the settlement plan should include employment, together with case management and follow-up.

Settlement services should be delivered seamlessly from pre-arrival to post-arrival support. Some aspects of settlement will be realized only after arrival, and immigrants will need settlement support in Canada once they are here.

Mentorship and work experience such as internships should be integrated in all employment initiatives. TRIEC, which is one of our

member organizations here in Ontario, is reporting a 90% success rate because of mentorship programs. The practice firms model is a good one for newcomers, resulting in more than 80% becoming employed in the field. I can talk during the questions and answers about practice firms.

Again, we want to stress the need for francophone services outside of Quebec. These services should be brought up to par with the services that already exist in anglophone and allophone communities. We believe this training should include English language training outside of Quebec as well as supports for employment including employment mentorship and bridge training.

As in any other field, there is a need for ongoing professional development and training for settlement workers, both English and French speaking.

The Chair: You have less than a minute, Ms. Douglas.

Ms. Debbie Douglas: Thank you.

This is particularly urgent given the many changes to immigration policies and programs. E-learning is growing in popularity, and is a good way to maximize resources, but some learning must be done face to face and in the company of peers. We believe Citizenship and Immigration Canada has an obligation to support this kind of lifelong learning and ongoing supports for those working on the front lines.

We cannot neglect the importance of family reunification, and as I said, economic and social integration are interconnected, and no woman or man is an island.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your usual excellent presentation. We appreciate that.

We have Audrey Andrews who is the manager of the diversity and immigration program, from the Regional Municipality of Durham.

I welcome you to the committee as well. You have up to eight minutes.

Ms. Audrey Andrews (Manager, Diversity and Immigration Program, Regional Municipality of Durham): Honourable Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share the perspective of the Regional Municipality of Durham on how to promote the economic prosperity of immigrants through settlement services. To provide some context, I offer the following information.

Durham region is located just east of the city of Toronto, has a population of approximately 608,000, and is comprised of one upper-tier municipality and eight lower-tier municipalities. Major employers include health, education, and energy sectors. The majority of residents work in small to medium enterprises. Many residents commute to the city of Toronto to work. Durham region is a designated infill centre in Ontario's places to grow, and anticipates a population of one million by 2031. Much of that growth is expected to come from immigration. Roughly 21% of the population are immigrants and just over 7% of the population are recent immigrants.

The Regional Municipality of Durham holds the LIP, local immigration partnership contract and has since 2009. I manage a small team that has worked exclusively on the LIP for the last six years. This team works to engage the broader community, business, educators, not-for-profits, local governments, and civil society to achieve the objectives of the LIP. The primary objectives of the LIP, as I'm sure most of you know, are to act as facilitators that create cultures of inclusion, to promote the economic and social settlement and integration of newcomers in a coordinated, efficient fashion, and to ensure that local intelligence informs local planning.

The Durham LIP works in partnership with local or lower-tier municipalities to align efforts for the best outcomes for newcomers across jurisdictional lines. Tracey Vaughan-Barrett from the Town of Ajax, one of the eight municipalities within Durham region, is on this panel as well. Hearing from both of us, we had hoped would give the committee a broad understanding of the Durham perspective.

I offer the following suggestions and observations based on my experience managing the LIP, as a former member of the Conference Board of Canada's round table on immigration, and as a member of a number of cross-sectoral committees working in and around the greater Toronto area.

I've been invited to speak to the committee about improving economic prosperity through settlement services.

The first step is defining what a settlement service is. In my opinion, we are all in the business of settlement. Traditional settlement services are government-funded. Non-traditional settlement services are provided by everyone, or at least could be. Libraries have been doing settlement work for years, not because they're funded to do so, but because their mandate is to meet the needs of all residents.

It is my experience that the economic integration and subsequent success of immigrants is most likely to happen when traditional CIC-funded settlement services and non-CIC-funded services, in other words, the broader community, work in tandem to create an environment that lends itself to immigrant success. LIPs are contractually prohibited from providing direct service, settlement or otherwise. Those in the broader community referenced in my opening statement, through which the bulk of the work of the LIP is done, are not considered traditional settlement providers. The distinction is important and worth repeating. In Durham region, the model of LIP we adopted purposely engaged the broader community to examine its structures, policies, programs and procedures to determine if they were inclusive of all populations.

This type of reflective work takes years to position, accomplish, and embed. It is a work in progress.

Traditional settlement services prepare newcomers for communities. LIPs prepare communities, institutions and organizations for newcomers. When they work together, real systemic change has an opportunity to occur. LIPs, particularly LIPs positioned within another order of government, can act as agents of change. Education and information are accelerants of change. LIPs are positioned, if resourced and empowered to do so, to act as conduits to business, economic development departments, boards of trade, chambers of commerce, human resource councils, and organizations to inform and educate these bodies about the economic imperative of immigration.

If we can anticipate an increase in job-ready newcomers via express entry, the role of traditional settlements services shifts to meet a different set of needs, as does the role of the employer and the community that newcomers settle in. While the net effects of express entry are yet to be seen, it is fair to anticipate that this system will affect both traditional and non-traditional settlement services. If all parties understand the imperative of retention and not simply attraction, then the rules each play by can be more easily defined.

Looking ahead, I see traditional settlement services changing to meet the needs of a new demographic of newcomers and tailoring programs and services for the job ready, for dependent family members, and for refugees. LIPs will work with the broader community through education and knowledge brokering to inform practices around barrier-free workplaces, barrier-free institutions, and inclusive management practices. Communities like Ajax, which you will hear from in a moment, are adapting policies, expanding recreation programs, and reviewing board recruitment policies to ensure that they are barrier-free, meet the needs of all residents and create pathways to becoming part of the Canadian family.

• (0905)

This is happening in Durham already. As an example, the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, with the help of the Durham LIP, recently struck a diversity committee whose purpose is to develop a diversity engagement plan. While in its early stages, this committee is a first step towards business representatives acknowledging that it is in their best interest to understand the effects of immigration, express entry, changing demographics, and the impact on business practices, employers, employees, and customers. They are actively seeking out education and information, and the Durham LIP is making sure they have it.

The best hope for the rapid economic success of newcomers is to engage the full community in creating welcoming communities. The key players are engaged. We all have a role to play.

In summary, I would urge the committee to consider the following:

Fund traditional settlement services to do what they do best. Prepare newcomers for communities.

Empower and resource LIPs to continue the work that they have begun. Prepare communities for newcomers and lay the groundwork for institutional change.

Acknowledge and support the role of non-traditional settlement service providers, the organizations that operationalize the welcoming communities that attract and retain newcomers.

Thank you.

● (0910)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Andrews. Your presentation will be very helpful.

We have Tracey Vaughan-Barrett, who is the director of recreation and culture from the Town of Ajax.

Welcome.

Ms. Tracey Vaughan-Barrett (Director, Recreation and Culture, Town of Ajax): Honourable Chair, and members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about our perspective at the Town of Ajax on how to promote the economic prosperity of immigrants through settlement services.

Prior to joining municipal government, I worked in the NGO sector for many years. During that time I had the honour of being an executive director of a settlement agency and had the opportunity to act as a convening partner on the development of the local immigration partnership council that Audrey spoke about. I functioned as a contributing partner to the development of the immigration portal and had the opportunity to be the lead agency that developed and built the Ajax welcome centre for immigrants.

What is important to note about Durham and the Ajax context is that these three projects work closely together, each informing the other to create broad-based opportunities to collectively work on the objectives that Audrey spoke about.

Today we're discussing a topic of utmost importance. We all know the statistics regarding our dependence on immigration from a population and labour force perspective. We are all too aware of the stories of lost productivity when underutilizing the skills of internationally trained professionals. It's a waste of Canada's human capital and it's a loss in time and money invested in the immigration process, working against our mandate to build a better and stronger Canada.

Municipalities are recognizing the importance of playing a stronger role in building welcoming communities. More immigrants are choosing to settle outside of Toronto, primarily in second- and third-tier cities. Ajax is one of the top three fastest growing communities in Ontario, leading the Durham region in newcomer migration at over 34%. The challenges faced by fast growing second- and third-tier cities are many and can include working to overcome the attitudes low population diversity has fostered over time, a lack of awareness or sensitivity in some public institutions, and limited programs and service options available for our residents.

Audrey spoke about the need for traditional and non-traditional settlement partners to work more effectively together for real

systemic change. There is a need for closer engagement between LIPs, community services and public institutions, and an understanding of collective leadership and joint capacity development. All parties need to determine how we make this happen consistently and what the opportunities are for innovative solutions to improve settlement outcomes and economic integration.

Together we need to employ a systems lens to recognize the roles that various stakeholders play and their influence on successful settlement and integration outcomes. As government, and in our case local government, we have something of value to significantly influence other stakeholders on the topic of immigration. As Audrey mentioned, education and information are accelerants for change. This includes varying access to information, to resources, and to the influential relationships required to make community level change. This is a significant value that municipalities and LIPs have an opportunity to contribute.

Settlement agencies are valuable partners for communities. They provide newcomers with the tools and information that are required to successfully navigate our local networks. Their hands-on expertise signals us as municipalities about the emerging community level trends and the opportunities and challenges that we will be facing in our community. To ensure success, all levels of government need to collectively legitimize this value and ensure that settlement agencies are positioned for long-term planning.

Settlement and integration are subject to many variables, sometimes taking longer to achieve all aspects of successful integration. Settlement agencies need space, scope for scalability, and to be equipped to meet the changing needs of newcomers.

There have been some great results in the area of bridging, internships, and employment support programs. Funders need to better monitor and track this success and further invest in these areas of success. They are critical to ensuring economic outcomes for immigrants. This type of targeted work requires sustainable resourcing to ensure that settlement partners can come to planning tables as equal partners and have the capacity to be innovative and to be resilient.

CIC and traditional and non-traditional partners need to better understand and be better equipped to speak to the return on investment for the settlement and integration program. The challenges are well documented. Documents that Debbie mentioned, like "Making Ontario Home" from OCASI, cite a lack of awareness of settlement services, long waiting times to access settlement services in some jurisdictions, a lack of settlement services outside of major centres, and insufficient numbers or diversity of employment programs, in particular bridging programs.

● (0915)

Communities need to have strong data to guide decisions. Information is critical. This is a point I will return to shortly.

CIC has changed the composition of immigrants to be more economic; however, to ensure true economic integration, employer attitudes need to shift regarding the hiring of immigrants. Taking the best and brightest from around the world when they are unable to meet their potential is counterproductive to the policy goal. This work, attitudinal shift, as Audrey mentioned, takes a great deal of sustained effort over time by multiple stakeholders, often those not identified as traditional settlement providers. Again, this is where LIPs and municipalities can play a facilitation role.

It's important to recognize that sustained community-level change is not quick and easy. The system that newcomers will find themselves navigating is a complex one, made up of several stakeholders with different perspectives, levels of readiness, and goal objectives. Over time this system has evolved to include more stakeholders resulting in greater complexity. The more complex a system becomes, the harder it is to predict the effect of policy and program changes.

In every system, all stakeholders have specific goals that serve their interest. These goals are influenced by many factors, and the key is finding our points of intersection. This requires an advanced understanding of localized systems. This is critical knowledge for engaging stakeholders and guiding policy and program decisions. This knowledge lies in community and with our traditional and our non-traditional settlement partners.

There has been much discussion on the need for a national vision for our immigration program and a navigation system for all of us to use to guide us in the work of nation building. A shared vision is key to mobilizing the work of our traditional and non-traditional partners to ensure economic integration for immigrants and refugees is achieved. Once this vision is clear, stakeholder goals will align with that vision, and designing and implementing immigration policy will become easier and more stakeholders will benefit.

The Chair: You have less than a minute, Ms. Vaughan-Barrett.

Ms. Tracey Vaughan-Barrett: Yes.

In terms of my recommendations to the committee, I have four pieces that I'd like to share with you.

Our council and staff believe that Ajax is a community where smart people, strong economies, and innovative ideas intersect.

In communities like Ajax and Durham region, where our communities change at a rapid pace, we must ensure that settlement services are equipped to meet the changing needs of newcomers and that programs and services have the opportunity to be innovative and locally responsive.

We need to continue to resource LIPs to facilitate sustainable community-level change and work in partnership to build more collaborative relationships among all levels of government toward a common goal of economic prosperity for newcomers and social integration.

We need to identify opportunities for research and data collection to inform local plans and support stakeholders to make evidenced-based policy and program decisions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Sherman Chan is with the Canadian Council for Refugees, a national non-profit umbrella organization, with member organizations involved in the settlement, sponsorship, and protection of refugees and immigrants. Several years ago the organization published "Refugee Integration: Key concerns and areas for further research", a report on particular settlement and integration experiences of refugees in Canada, which highlighted some barriers to economic integration.

Mr. Chan, welcome to the committee. If possible, would you send a copy of that report to the chair and we'll have it translated. I believe members of the committee would be interested in seeing that report.

Mr. Sherman Chan (Executive Committee Member, Canadian Council for Refugees): Sure.

• (0920)

The Chair: Welcome, sir. You have up to eight minutes.

Mr. Sherman Chan: Thank you, Chair and honourable members, for inviting me here.

I'm on the CCR executive committee and I'm also a former co-chair of the immigration and settlement working group. In my day job I work at MOSAIC in Vancouver as the director of family and settlement services, and I've been working in settlement for the past 23 years.

There are four overarching points I'd like to highlight based on consultation with 170 CCR member agencies.

First of all, we believe economic integration is only one aspect of integration. It is important to recognize and value all forms of contribution and participation by newcomers in Canadian society. The settlement sector offers services that are crucial not only to the economic integration and prosperity of newcomers, but also to their social and civil integration and to the integration of newcomer youth. Settlement services are a long-term investment. We also believe that with settlement services we can maximize the prosperity and long-term potential commitment for new immigrants to society.

The second point is that integration is a two-way street. Communities need to welcome newcomers as much as newcomers need to adapt to Canada. Many barriers to newcomers remain to meeting their potential economically, due to discrimination in the labour market, lack of recognition of experience and credentials acquired overseas. This is why settlement service providers need to invest in outreach to the host community, not just direct services to newcomers. There are examples of successful partnership and bridging program models. For example, the local immigration partnerships in B.C. was mentioned. It used to be called welcoming communities. Also with respect to bridging programs, we have seen today there are many innovative projects with CIC on refugee and employer networking. Those are the examples.

The third point we see that is important to mention is that settlement services facilitate the economic integration and prosperity of newcomers. It is important to understand that newcomers, even the most vulnerable who come as refugees or migrant workers, contribute to the economic prosperity of Canada by paying taxes and contributing as workers and entrepreneurs. Recent media coverage indicated that refugees are contributing more than the investors group, and also that after 15 years the incomes of refugee immigrants rose to \$30,000. Two-thirds of refugees report an income by their fifth year on a par with the Canadian average.

The last overarching point I'd like to mention is the importance of mental health and psychosocial support services, especially refugees and other newcomers in vulnerable situations, such as abused spouses and newcomer youth, since without addressing mental health issues, all aspects of integration and prosperity are slowed.

I'd like to mention five specific points about the contribution of settlement services to economic prosperity.

First, Canada has a broad network of specialized settlement organizations that are both close to the local communities they serve and highly skilled in identifying and responding to the particular needs of newcomers. These assets have been acquired over decades and are valued internationally. Many other countries are keen to learn from the Canadian experience. The CCR believes it is important to build on these existing assets.

Second, settlement services provide social capital for immigrants upon arrival. In many places networks are just as important as qualifications for finding employment. Service providers serve as references, advocate for the newcomer, and engage with employers to open the doors to employment and economic opportunities.

Third, employment is a crucial aspect of settlement. However, having a job does not mean all settlement needs have been met. It is important to have services available to address the full range of personal and family issues related to integration; otherwise, newcomers will not be able to maintain employment and progress economically.

• (0925)

Fourth, settlement service providers act as a liaison between the realities of newcomer integration and the newcomer integration policy and programming departments in the government. The settlement sector is an independent intermediary that is invested in newcomer prosperity and that keeps the decision-makers connected to the reality of newcomer experience.

Fifth, it is short-sighted from CCR's perspective to have narrow eligibility criteria for access to settlement services, thereby excluding, for example, temporary foreign workers, citizens, and refugee claimants. Such restrictions work against the economic prosperity of many newcomers who will become permanent residents.

Sixth, family reunification is key to integration, including economic success. Long delays and barriers to processing of spouses and children make families more fragile and can have long-term impacts. Reducing the maximum age of dependants to 19 years and maintaining barriers to sponsoring parents and grandparents leave families divided. These changes are especially

important for the economic integration and prosperity of newcomer women, since family members may take on child care tasks that would otherwise require women to stay at home and not enter the labour force.

The Chair: You have less than a minute, sir.

Mr. Sherman Chan: Thank you.

Seventh, settlement services are most effective when there are not excessive administrative requirements. We refer to the 2007 Blue Ribbon report recommending a change in the funding formula for the administration of funding contracts. We would recommend that CIC take another look at that.

My last point is that newcomers often face many obstacles within government programs, which limit their capacity to progress economically. These include delays in processing immigration paperwork, and challenges with getting errors in immigration documents corrected. Many of the settlement workers spend a lot of time helping them with those things. Based on our sector's experience on the ground, we think that CIC could assist by taking action on issues identified as barriers to promoting economic prosperity by the settlement sector.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Our final witness this morning is John Shields, who is a professor at Ryerson University. His research interests include immigrant economic integration, in particular, the variables that affect labour market outcomes. He recently co-authored a report on settlement and integration.

Professor, I believe committee members have that report.

He prepared this for Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and this report summarizes existing research and highlights some emerging issues as well.

Welcome to the committee, sir.

Professor John Shields (Professor, Ryerson University, Department of Politics and Public Administration, As an Individual): I'd like to thank the standing committee for the invitation to appear today to address the topic of promoting economic integration through settlement services. It's an area of great interest to Canadians.

My brief opening remarks are largely derived from this recent research synthesis report on settlement and integration, of which I'm a co-author, that was commissioned through the immigration research centre CERIS, based in Toronto, and as was noted by the chair, funded by CIC. The report, I should note, is available in both English and French.

There has been an ongoing concern related to the economic performance of immigrant newcomers in Canada, which has seen a decline over the last number of decades compared to past immigrant cohorts. The major reason we've seen a fall in the economic outcomes for newcomers is a result of a significantly altered labour market associated with the rise of more precarious employment forms, which has meant less secure jobs and generally lower compensation in terms of wages, salaries, and benefits than in the past. This is occurring at the same time that the actual human capital assets of immigrants arriving in Canada have remained very high, in fact, have been superior to past decades.

The economic difficulties faced by many newcomers pose the challenge regarding how settlement services can better address economic integration today. Before I turn to these challenges more directly, there are a few points that are important to make note of and to keep in mind.

First, Canada has a long and very successful history of newcomer integration. Canadian immigration and settlement policies have been central to the Canadian settlement story, and they have come to be widely considered examples of best practices to be learned from and copied by other nations. The Canadian model of settlement services is one where government has provided financial support for settlement programming that is delivered largely by non-profit-based agencies located in communities where immigrants reside. The fact that this remains something that's viewed internationally very positively is reinforced. Next week, actually, a delegation from Singapore will be visiting Ryerson University, and we'll be talking about integration and settlement policy. This continues to be something that is looked at very favourably internationally.

Second, the very existence of such public investments in newcomers is not just materially important, but it sends an important symbolic message to the immigrant population and to society more generally, namely, that newcomers are welcome. The warmth of Canada's welcome to newcomers has been central to the immigration process, and settlement support has been key to this. Without good social integration, effective economic integration is not going to be achieved.

Third, immigration remains key to Canadian economic growth and to a resilient, dynamic, and expanding labour market. This is especially important in a rapidly greying labour market that needs to tap into the global talent pool.

Fourth, it's important to maintain a long-term view of settlement and integration. Integration is a lifelong process. It can't simply be judged in five-year or ten-year blocks. In fact, it stretches into the second and third generations.

One of the telling successes of the Canadian integration experience is the fact that children of immigrants, second generations, do so well in school, actually outperforming by a considerable degree Canadian-born children, in terms of university attendance and achievements at university and colleges. This is a very powerful indicator of successful integration, so it tells us we shouldn't simply look at the parents, but we also have to consider the children. We also need a sort of family lens and a generational lens, a longer view of immigration and integration.

One of the most valuable things that non-profit settlement services provides is connection. They link immigrants to other people, to other members of Canadian society, and increasingly importantly, to employers. In short, they build immigrant social capital. Establishing these people networks is absolutely crucial to success in the modern labour market. This can be very clearly shown in immigrant employment programs that deal with such things as job mentoring and skills bridging.

● (0930)

While settlement services have been an important ingredient to Canada's success and economic integration, a review of the literature indicates that changing labour markets and immigration patterns do call for adjustments.

This includes, for example, the need for, first of all, enhanced labour market information, particularly pre-arrival and early information and support services. Information and supports offered to prospective newcomers in their home country can help not only orient and prepare them for Canadian culture and way of life but also connect them with services and supports upon arrival. For immigrants, obtaining information and seeking supports as early as possible upon arrival in Canada are critical components of success today.

Second is the need to adjust investments in soft skills, cultural understandings of the workings of the Canadian labour market, so soft skills training as well as mentoring. Studies have shown that mentoring programs have significantly improved participants' economic standing within a year following the mentoring experience.

Third would be that we need continued work around foreign credential recognition. This has been a rather hard nut to crack. Also bridge training has proven quite effective as well as work around work-specific language training.

Fourth, forging business partnerships with settlement service providers has become more important in improving labour market outcomes for immigrants. This is increasingly significant as businesses have become more important actors in the immigrant selection process.

Additionally, we need to take note of a growing literature examining immigrants' experiences in the informal labour market, particularly in self-employment and entrepreneurship. It points to the exclusion of many newcomers from the formal labour market as the reason that immigrants turn to the informal economy.

● (0935)

The Chair: You have less than a minute, Professor Shields.

Prof. John Shields: The literature also identifies the diverse backgrounds of immigrant entrepreneurs and those who are self-employed. Self-employment among ethno-cultural communities is also positively associated with organizational density as measured by non-profit organizations serving them.

The literature highlights unique barriers to immigrants starting businesses or being self-employed, outlining the challenges, experiences, and potential services and supports to help those immigrants successfully pursue self-employment or entrepreneurial opportunities in Canada. Self-employment and entrepreneurship in the current labour market have become important routes to employment to prevent poverty and foster economic success. However, in general, newcomers lack the strong networks and Canadian legal and financial knowledge to be successful in their endeavours. Consequently, additional supports that immigrant entrepreneurs and those who will be successfully self-employed require include legal supports, financial and loan processing supports, real world business knowledge, mentorship, and networking opportunities with co-ethnics and immigrant entrepreneurs. Non-profits are well positioned to provide this.

The Chair: Thank you very much to all of you for your presentations.

We'll now have a dialogue with members of the committee. We may or may not have a vote. If there is, the bells will ring at 10 o'clock, at which time the meeting will end. If we don't have a vote, we'll proceed until 9:45. So, as usual, we never know.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): That would be 10:45.

The Chair: I'm sorry, 10:45.

Thank you, Mr. Shory.

Mr. Menegakis.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Thank you to all of our witnesses for appearing before us today and for your presentations. I have listened quite intently and I'm very pleased to see that we have good partners out there in the field working with us on this very important subject.

As you know, our country has sustained the highest levels of immigration in the history of the country over the last number of years. In fact, this year's levels plan, which was tabled in the House in the fall of 2014, is very ambitious. It's the highest levels plan we have ever had for the country. It ranges from 260,000 to 285,000 newcomers coming into Canada in 2015—that's about 0.8% of our population—65% of whom will come through our economic streams: federal skilled workers, federal skilled trades, Canadian experience class, live-in caregivers, to name but a few. There will be 25% who come through family reunification: parents, grandparents, spouses, children, and so forth. In keeping with Canada's record of being one of the most compassionate countries in the world, when it comes to our humanitarian stream, 10% will be primarily refugees.

We're very focused on giving as much assistance as we possibly can as a government to our newcomers to ensure that they are empowered moving forward in their new lives here in Canada, and to enhance as much as possible the potential for successful outcomes for them in our country.

Settlement funding, I should mention, has jumped from \$200 million when the current government assumed power to \$600 million across Canada, with an additional almost \$55 million for refugee resettlement.

I should mention that I represent the riding of Richmond Hill, which is in York region. York region is your immediate neighbour, as you know, to the west of Durham region. I suspect it's the same for everybody across the country, but many of the issues you deal with on a daily basis are very similar. Of course, we are just across the road. Once you cross that Durham region line, you're into York region.

Let me start with you, if I may, Ms. Andrews, and then perhaps Ms. Vaughan-Barrett can weigh in on this.

What do you believe are some of the key factors for the successful immigration of immigrants? What are the immigrants actually getting out of these settlement programs?

● (0940)

Ms. Audrey Andrews: I would reiterate what I said in my remarks, that I honestly link the economic success of newcomers to the collective will of the community in which they reside, and that when all players are engaged and we understand our collective responsibility, and our collective benefit when everyone is successful, it can be a game changer.

In Durham region and in communities across Ontario, in different ways the broader community is being engaged to have this conversation about how we all can contribute to this. I can't say enough how important it is that all elements of society participate in this conversation and understand that they share in this responsibility. When you contribute to the success of your neighbour, you contribute to your success and you contribute to the success of your neighbourhood, community, town, Ontario, and Canada.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

Ms. Tracey Vaughan-Barrett: Through the chair to the member, I would add to that as well.

First and foremost, I think it's critically important that settlement agencies, as I mentioned, be well positioned to provide the tools and resources required to navigate our system. Coming to Canada is complex, as I recall from coming to Canada as an immigrant myself with my parents. You need basic information, tools, and resources to understand the map you need to follow.

To Audrey's point, it is critically important when working with those institutions and organizations for them to understand the benefit, understand the barriers, and have those good, solid, conversations, and have the leaders at the table who can make change in their organizations to ensure that the map works. You have to have the map, and then the map has to work.

In terms of the data piece, what I think is truly important for economic integration is to be able to understand our emerging needs and the way we work to accommodate that integration.

Ajax was recently designated as the first competitive-ready community in Canada. It looked at 175 factors, basically to assess our community readiness for investment. Playing a very strong role among them were diversity, immigration, and having the tools to manage that diversity and immigration. Having welcome centres and settlement services well positioned and a LIP was a huge factor in our success in becoming accredited. It talks about real attraction of investment that's real dollars and cents.

One of our biggest challenges with getting our designation was having access to real-time labour market data. There's that mutual plug: one, being able to speak to the resources we have, and two, being able to better predict. When we looked at our American counterparts with whom we were compared, we didn't have the same sort of robust dataset. My plug would be to ask how we get more localized labour market data and other data to ensure that we're ready, and also, how to speak to the investment of CIC, in this case, and it is attracting investment and employers to locate in Ajax. I think that's a huge win and speaks to the value of the programs.

The Chair: You have less than a minute.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Okay.

Some of the things we've heard have been very interesting, from previous witnesses as well, particularly the importance of language and of some of the skills that people need so that they can apply for jobs moving forward.

I'm going to ask Ms. Douglas a quick question.

Welcome back to our committee. Perhaps in the little time left you could mention some of the barriers that you see newcomers facing.

• (0945)

Ms. Debbie Douglas: I think that you have referred to them. Foreign credential recognition certainly remains a key issue. What we know is that even after credentials have been recognized, depending on the particular profession, often there are not enough internship or residents positions available for internationally trained physicians, as an example. Employers are still not as comfortable as they should be in recognizing the credentials that are seen as legitimate in Canada, and so they're not hiring immigrants who are coming in, in terms of skills and work experience, at the level.... We have to put in place more interventions at the employer level so that they have confidence in the credentials, but also so that they begin to see the benefit of having a diverse workforce.

We have been talking about this—

The Chair: I'm sorry. We have to move on.

Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Debbie Douglas: I'll come back to it.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have a clock that I have to run by. I'm sorry.

Ms. Debbie Douglas: I absolutely appreciate that, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you to our witnesses.

Your presentations today have added incredibly to this study, and I appreciate that very much.

I have two key questions. I hope you can address both of them.

I'll start with you, Ms. Douglas, but certainly I'll welcome comments from our other witnesses.

The first one, and Mr. Menegakis referred to it briefly, is that we have just completed a study on the challenges faced by immigrant women. I wonder whether you could comment on the special challenges that women face when they're settling into a new

community. I'm thinking about language training, the availability of reliable, affordable child care, and of course the issue of settling the family.

Ms. Debbie Douglas: Let me start off by saying that we need a national child care program in Canada. Regardless of where women arrive in Canada, child care continues to be critically important to their labour market participation, but even to their being able to access settlement services. In Ontario, but I think this is true across the country, our language program funded by Citizenship and Immigration provides some child care spaces, and women have absolutely found that incredibly important. We also need to look at the hours of service so that funding allows agencies to deliver programming at all hours so that they're able to accommodate how families have to work and pay the rent, feed and take of their children, and all of those kinds of things.

For immigrant women, what we find often is that they put off their settlement needs while their spouse—and I'm speaking here for heterosexual families—who is often male goes ahead and does the upgrading first, the credential recognition first, while women take survival jobs to feed the families. We have to be able to see how we can support women's faster integration into the labour market if that is what they choose to do.

We also know there are many women who want to start their own businesses. We have many cottage industries, very much on the periphery, what John calls the informal economy. There has to be some way for us to begin to identify those opportunities and provide funding support for those women to be able to grow their businesses where there's an opportunity to do so. When we talk about entrepreneurship, when we talk about self-employment, you also have to look at the needs of immigrant women.

Often in terms of violence against women, which continues to be an ongoing concern for us, it's a concern for all women here in Canada. It's also true for immigrant and refugee women, and the kinds of programming that needs to be in place beginning at the settlement agency level is critically important. Citizenship and Immigration Canada absolutely has to be a partner, along with Status of Women Canada, in terms of providing funding support for those kinds of services.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: You said something in your remarks that I found very interesting. You said that family plays a key role in social integration, and without social integration there's very little economic success. I am wondering, re there real barriers to family unification? What are your clients experiencing? If there are barriers, what should the government be doing to help overcome these barriers so that we can have families together?

• (0950)

Ms. Debbie Douglas: The changes to our family reunification program where we've capped applications at 5,000 per year and we've also instituted our 10-year multiple in and out visa—what we call the super visa—have really made a difference in terms of who gets into Canada and how families are supported. The changes have created a class bias. Families with money can afford the super visa. It is families at the middle income and lower who are not able to get their families in.

It's interesting. I pay attention to the family reunification application numbers and for the last two years, before the end of February, the 5,000 cap has been reached. We know there are many families who want to sponsor family members, grandparents, which goes back to the child care issue and women being able to participate fully in the labour market. Often parents and grandparents are the kinds of backbone supports that families need to be able to fully participate. They are also the cultural foundation of families.

If you look at China's one child policy, for example, in terms of the children being here, the parents being overseas, it means that the families are not able to fully concentrate on building their lives here in Canada, because they're having to support families overseas. We look at the economic implications of those kinds of things when we look at other communities in terms of remission and where dollars are spent. We can look at all of these kinds of social fallouts because of the kinds of changes we've made to our family reunification program.

It was good to hear Mr. Menegakis speak to the percentages. On the face of it, though, although family reunification is the cornerstone of Canada's immigration program, it only makes up 25%. I understand that. Principal applicants come with their families, their children and spouses, and those kinds of things, so I don't mean to pretend that isn't true, but we've certainly been moving away from the family as the cornerstone of our immigration program. I think that both anecdotally as well as research would show us that when immigrants have their families together, they do better socially and they do better economically.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

Mr. Chan.

Mr. Sherman Chan: I'd like to add one point about immigrant women, and it's true across Canada. Many of them spend much of their time looking after their children or family, and when they want to access settlement services, their eligibility has expired because once they become a Canadian citizen, they can't get settlement services.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: That's a very good point.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. McCallum.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): I'd like to welcome the witnesses.

I agree with Ms. Douglas about the centrality of family unification. I think we have had problems recently with the skyrocketing of processing times for family members, which I see in my office in Markham every day.

I would like to begin on the subject of refugees with Mr. Chan.

I agree with Mr. Menegakis in general about Canada's glowing record, but I think that record's been tarnished in the last few years, with Syria in particular.

I heard you say that refugees often in the medium term do better than other newcomers, but in the short term they have specific issues different from others. Are there gaps in the settlement services where

we could improve the system for addressing specific needs of refugees? Are there improvements that could be made in how those delivery services are provided?

Mr. Sherman Chan: Yes, for sure. I know that with CIC we have been, as a sector, addressing this issue through many venues, through the CCL consultations, and also through the National Settlement Council that we really are looking at.

In the short term, yes, many refugees are vulnerable. They come to Canada without anything or even without good preparation. Then we see that we have to look at the service even for a model and whether the model has to be adjusted. Many settlement services are designed for information and referrals, short-term based counselling or support. It's not really looking at settlement planning that is more long term and that has a case management approach. Now we are moving in that direction. Of course, there's always the challenge that if we are spending more time in a particular family of refugees, that means the cost will be higher. I think it's more like a balancing act. How can we incorporate long-term planning and case management, address the psychosocial needs or trauma needs of refugees, and give them more information and consistency? I think that is what we are looking at.

• (0955)

Hon. John McCallum: Thank you.

Professor Shields, I noticed when you mentioned the need for labour market information improvement that a number of the other witnesses nodded their heads, as they're doing right now again. That seems to be a big issue.

Can you tell me if that information has deteriorated in recent years, or has it always been bad? Perhaps more positively, what precise improvements are you talking about that would improve the system?

Prof. John Shields: I think we've long had challenges around labour market information. The thing to remember is that national data is useful, but labour markets are local, essentially, so we need to get that information at the local level.

I agree with the point that was made that we need all parties within a region working, so local governments, provincial and national, and non-profit agencies and so forth. We need to get that information at a local level.

Hon. John McCallum: What kind of information? I remember when we were dealing with immigrant workers—

Prof. John Shields: We need to know how many jobs in particular sectors are available within a particular region, with a profile of the population that is within those jobs, where the potential gaps are emerging, and age profiles. Ideally, we need fairly detailed information regarding that.

The Chair: Less than a minute, sir.

Hon. John McCallum: All right. Very quickly, one of the issues in terms of credentials that I have heard is that often people, before they get here, don't know the rules. They come here as a doctor or engineer, and they think they can go to work the next day in Canada.

Is there a gap in terms of providing people with the information they need before they come to Canada as to what they have to do in order to work in their profession?

Prof. John Shields: I think the evidence suggests that there are some gaps in that regard. Having greater information available that is easier to access from overseas would help with that.

To some degree there is a large amount of information on the Internet, but sometimes it's a bit overwhelming. We need a central way in which that information is distributed and where potential newcomers can go very easily to access that type of information.

Hon. John McCallum: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Leung.

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and witnesses.

I wish to comment that our government is extremely concerned about family reunification, and because of that, we have implemented a program whereby parents and grandparents can actually come in on a 10-year super visa. The approval rate has been over 80% among those who have applied.

Let me also move on to say that our government invests \$600 million in settlement services. That is a significant kind of investment.

I'd like to hear from Mr. Shields first.

How do you see that we should measure that? What is a good measuring stick to determine whether we are getting the best return for this investment? How do we track the longer term integration of immigrants, rather than processing them through and then sending them out into the community?

I'll hear from you first, please.

Prof. John Shields: Of course, measurement is always a little tricky because of variables that come in to determine success. If you have a recession, obviously the outcomes are going to be very different from during a period where there's job expansion and so forth. I guess I would start by saying that measuring things directly is not an easy task. However, I think if we actually look at integration in Canada, even with greater difficulties of immigrants in terms of matching their skills to jobs and so forth, I think we still see a lot of achievement that has been happening.

I mentioned the notion of the second generation, which also means that we need to take more long-term views. The children of immigrants, in almost all cases, are doing exceptionally well.

Also, in terms of settlement programs, I think government has to provide some funds to collect the kinds of data that are necessary to do these sorts of measurements, and also to fund studies that are done at a more macro level as well as at the local level. This would

involve both quantitative and qualitative types of indicators. Right now we tend to do a lot of counting of things like bums in seats, but we don't look so much at the quality of outcomes. That's a much more difficult type of task.

• (1000)

The Chair: Excuse me, sir. We'll stop the clock.

There is a bell ringing, but I think that's to see if there's a quorum. If it rings again, we will have to leave.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: That may just be the opening of the House.

The Chair: That's what I meant, sir. It's to see if there's a quorum.

If there are no more bells, we'll stay, and if there is a bell, we will have to leave.

Mr. Leung, sorry to interrupt you.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Ms. Andrews or Ms. Vaughan-Barrett, would you like to answer the question about how we measure and how we determine whether we are getting the best bang for the buck?

Ms. Audrey Andrews: I'd like an opportunity, through the chair, to reply to that.

In Durham region, we adopted what's called a results-based accountability methodology. With this framework we're trying to measure change at a community level.

We ask three questions of everything: What did we do? How much did we do? Is anybody better off? The third question is the most important for the purpose—or at all, in my opinion. It creates an opportunity to tell the story behind the curve, and these are the most valuable pieces of information we can get to tell our story of whether we are doing what we said we were going to do.

I would really underscore the importance of a framework, but underscore the importance of understanding that it's an investment in this framework and that communities need to be resourced to do this in particular. Beyond counting bums in seats, it's an endeavour, and it requires resources and professional staff. It can't be done off the corner of a desk.

Ms. Tracey Vaughan-Barrett: Through the chair to the member, just to pick up on that point, we recognize the positive moves CIC has made in terms of the changes to the annualized report and some broadening of the collection of data. I think it's a great move. The unfortunate piece is that we haven't been able to collectively put the data together to really speak to the return on investment, and that's really where we collectively need to do a better job. How do we give you the tools, the information, the resources to be able to speak to the change and the story behind the change? I think further improvements to that annualized report and to iCARE systems are certainly part of that answer. It's not just what CIC funds that tells the entire story. What is the process, the collection mechanism, like a results-based accountability framework, that can collect that and can inform the process? When we talk about sustainable community-level change, it means leadership of organizations in terms of board representation and senior management. Those are the things you're not going to get through a CIC year-end report, nor could you. However, how do we create these pools of intelligence that can help speak to the real meaningful change that's happening at the community level? I think that's really a critical question for all of us to talk about how we do a better job.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Chan, I'd like to hear from you about how we track refugee resettlement and how successful we are in terms of the longer term, as compared to the other immigrants who we bring in.

Mr. Sherman Chan: For me, I like the notion of telling stories. When we look at success, we're really looking at how individuals integrate and become part of Canada. We talked about the Vietnamese boat people many years ago, and nobody's talking about them now, because they are already in the community. They are part of the community. They are part of Canadian life. I think what we want to measure is the stories. We want to measure how they will be seen by others, how Canadian immigrants and refugees are functioning, how they participate in society: voting, going to the library, having gainful employment, having their children brought up nicely. I think those are the quality indicators of success.

• (1005)

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Go ahead, Ms. Douglas.

Ms. Debbie Douglas: I also think the other end of the equation is important, so that we are looking at how communities themselves have become more open and welcoming to immigrants and refugees; how public institutions have made changes to ensure that there is representation within their leadership structure; how employers are recruiting and hiring and retaining and promoting immigrants regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, or issues of disability, which is continuing to be a real challenge for us; how employers are engaging with new immigrants. The investment we make as a country in terms of ensuring immigrant and refugee settlement has to tell the stories both of the individuals and the communities of immigrants, but also the story of Canada—

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Debbie Douglas: —and of employers and public institutions.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Blanchette-Lamothe.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to go back to a reply Mr. Chan gave earlier in reply to a question put by my colleague Ms. Mathysen. q. The question was about the special needs of women regarding access to settlement services. Mr. Chan specified that these women needed to have access to those services for a longer period of time.

What did you mean, Mr. Chan? What could we do to ensure that women will have access to the services when they are ready for them?

[*English*]

Mr. Sherman Chan: For immigrant women, we see that many of them may not access services in the beginning because they have many family responsibilities which they think are important for them to look after first. By the time they feel it's time to integrate, to become economically engaged in a job or language improvement, for example, they may be already at the end of their permanent resident status and they may become Canadian citizens. That means they are not eligible for many of the services that are provided by CIC.

Ms. Debbie Douglas: I think the response is for us to take a look at CIC's eligibility criteria, and that services should be based on needs and not on status. For example, from what Sherman is saying, even when one becomes a citizen, those service needs don't go away, and folks should be able to access those services regardless of the fact that they've now become Canadians.

In many of the provinces, for example in Ontario, services are based on need, not immigration status. Whether or not you're a citizen, or you're a refugee claimant, or you're a refugee, or you're a permanent resident, you're able to access the kinds of settlement and integration supports that you need. It's something that over the last 20 years from time to time we have raised with Citizenship and Immigration Canada in terms of broadening who has access to services, but particularly around the citizenship piece.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Thank you.

Mr. Chan, earlier Ms. Douglas answered a question put by my colleague Ms. Mathysen about the importance of family reunification. Would you agree to say that in Canada family reunification is an important element for the economic integration of newcomers? In your opinion, are there obstacles to family reunification? Are there things the government could improve to facilitate family reunification and economic integration?

•(1010)

[English]

Mr. Sherman Chan: I would definitely say that there is always improvement, particularly for immigrant women, in terms of family reunification. We talked briefly about the child care provision for many government-assisted refugees. When they come here, they are attending the RAP, the resettlement assistance program. At this point, there is still no child care provision for them. Recently, CIC introduced some funding support for child care if someone has to access settlement services. In fact, there is not much funding for it, so it's not an easy access for many immigrant women who have children. As Debbie Douglas mentioned, we see that understanding about the family dynamics, understanding the role that women will play in Canada, and also understanding the way of parenting, the school system, and domestic violence are issues that immigrant women need to learn about.

In terms of obstacles, I would say that the introduction of conditional residence may put many immigrant women at risk, because their citizenship or their permanent residence may be taken away, or their partners may use it as a control method of retaining.

The Chair: Thank you.

To our guests, you'll be pleased to know there is no vote this morning, so we can spend lots of time with each other.

Mr. Shory.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Thank you to the witnesses. It's a very good morning, because virtually every witness is on the same page when we talk about economic success and social integration, which go hand in hand.

Before I go to you, Ms. Douglas, I want to make a quick comment on family reunification. As an immigrant myself, I understand how important it is. I also understand how frustrating it is when it takes five, seven, nine, or ten years. If I am in this position today, I believe my parents had a big role in it. When they came they took care of our children, and my wife and I could go back to our professions, and here I am, after upgrading my law degree here in Canada. I can talk a lot about foreign credential recognition also, and how important it is, because I lived through it for seven years. It took me seven years.

I agree with what you said, Ms. Douglas, on foreign credential recognition, that there must be a clear pathway. I'm very happy to share also that it was under the leadership of our government in 2008 which took the initiative to set aside \$50 million for a pan-Canadian framework. Of course, we all know that education is a provincial jurisdiction, and there are all these regulatory bodies, specifically in the medical profession, as you mentioned. You're right: people pass the exam and they go through the channels, but there are no residencies. I agree with you 100%. I agree that is a major issue, even though there is a lot of improvement in other professions.

I also want to make a quick comment on that 5,000 cap you mentioned. As I've mentioned about the backlog, I can only compare this government with the previous government. I don't want to make it a political issue, but this is my understanding. In Canadian history, for the parents and grandparents category, in no year did more than 17,000 immigrants come—in that category, normally it was between 8,000, 12,000, 13,000, 17,000—except for these last couple of years.

I believe our government, to change this policy, to deal with the backlog.... Like every department, CIC has limited funds. What they are doing is taking the number of applications they can process in a timely manner and saying that they have a target to process these applications within a couple of years after 2016-17, once they deal with the backlog.

Coming back economic and social integration, as you said, it is interconnected. They go hand by hand. In your role as executive director of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, I'd like you to comment on the policy you have in place with the council to direct the agencies to address this need. How much emphasis does the council put on socio-cultural integration?

•(1015)

Ms. Debbie Douglas: The council is very much aware. I talked about our research study, "Making Ontario Home", which clearly stated, and we heard from immigrants themselves, that the key issue for them is employment and economic integration. All of our member agencies are autonomous. They're stand-alone organizations. OCASI uses moral suasion more than anything else in terms of the kind of work they do. Our role is really to work in an attempt to influence government so that government is backing the kinds of innovative thinking and programming that agencies are developing to meet the employment support needs of those who show up in the agencies.

We talk about social integration all the time. I think we have to remember that 30 to 35 years ago, when we first formally introduced a program called settlement and integration in Canada, it really was about social integration. It was about how we make communities welcoming spaces. It was about how we work with immigrants to build some social capital so that they're able to participate fully in the community. Only recently have we begun to think of immigration and settlement funding as an economic tool.

It really is around taking a look at the kinds of programming we would need to be "privileging", for lack of a better word, in terms of refocusing what the sector is paying attention to. In Ontario, for example, about 10 years ago we thought that if economic integration were going to be important, then we needed to look at new structures. There was the creation of the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, which was then scaled up across the country. We wanted to take a look at the fact that while labour market and education are under provincial jurisdiction, the federal government is responsible for immigration settlement.

Integration also had a role to play in that, hence the creation of bridging programs. Basically, that's the federal government transferring dollars to the provinces so that they're able to support some of the bridging programs. The research bears out the fact that mentorship, paid internships, all are benefiting immigrants and refugees.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Ms. Douglas, but we have to move on.

Mr. Aspin.

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

I'm interested in pursuing a question on pre-arrival services. As you well know, pre-arrival services can be vital in the successful integration of immigrants. I would like to hear your comments with respect to pre-arrival services, such as learning French or English, and that kind of thing.

Ms. Debbie Douglas: We believe that pre-arrival services are important. The country is looking at scaling up pre-arrival services, but we also know there has to be a seamless transition between the kind of information that folks are getting overseas and the kind of services that they need once they arrive in Canada. Right now if we're looking at bringing in 265,000 to 285,000 folks with 65% coming through our economic class, we know that not all of those folks have access to the pre-arrival services overseas. We know that access depends on one's economic situation and whether one is able to travel to where those programs are being delivered.

There is some conversation about looking at online pre-arrival services. We absolutely support that, but we continue to stress that while pre-arrival services information is critically important for permanent immigrants in terms of making informed choices, the services once they arrive are even more important with regard to meeting their real-time needs. But yes, we absolutely support pre-arrival services.

Ms. Audrey Andrews: I'll give you an example of a simple pre-arrival service that I think has been fairly effective. In Durham region we developed an immigration portal, which is an online local resource about Durham region and its eight municipalities. On that portal is all the information you would ever need to learn, earn, settle, create community, and be successful. We track our statistics fairly carefully regarding from which countries of origin we are getting our hits. The important piece of the model we developed for our portal is that it was created and is sustained to this day by over 80 organizations that serve the needs of newcomers in the community. The 80 organizations are from business, settlement, education, and wherever. We come together quarterly to ensure that information is up to date, relevant, and of value obviously to someone who lives in the community but also for someone who is in their country of origin and is shopping for a community. We believe it's been successful.

• (1020)

Ms. Tracey Vaughan-Barrett: Following up on that point, that was again one of the very strong indicators of success for Ajax when we looked at our competitive-ready designation, because that type of localized tool with up-to-date localized knowledge and pathways is critical. I think it works hand in hand with more formalized processes that CIC has in terms of pre-arrival service. I think localized knowledge is critically important to underpin those things when someone says, "When I actually get to a community, as opposed to Canada or Ontario, if I go to Ajax, what does that mean for me? What's available? What does it look like? How fast will it happen? Who do I talk to?" They will know all of that before they come, and that's key.

Mr. Sherman Chan: I definitely see pre-arrival as really important. I came to Canada 27 years ago. I still remember the consulate telling me when I came here that my resumé would be at the bottom of the pile. I still remember him warning me that I would have to really survive, and I would have to do extra work to make myself successful.

It is also the familiarity; the local information is important. I chose Vancouver because I know Surrey. My education in England was in Surrey, and here it's called Surrey. When I looked at a map of Canada, it was close. I came from Hong Kong; it's close to Hong Kong as well. I think that is something many immigrants want to treasure, the familiarity. That makes it more personal. Like local information when we come here or when immigrants come here and there are already people here, they are kind of making a connection. I think that is what connection means.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Mathyssen.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: I want to come back to my first question, because I have a sense that Ms. Andrews, Ms. Vaughan-Barrett, and Mr. Shields may have wished to answer. It was on the challenges faced by immigrant women with regard to child care, training, and settling a whole family.

Could you comment, please?

Ms. Tracey Vaughan-Barrett: Thank you for the question. Certainly, it's one of deep interest for me.

Again, as referenced in my notes, when we look at second- and third-tier communities, where perhaps we look at landing stats, we're not necessarily registering as a community that may have had a high critical mass perhaps a few years ago. We see those numbers rising rapidly, but we're often a secondary landing spot, so we're not often captured in terms of landing statistics. When you have fewer numbers, unfortunately one of the challenges with that is that you may not be able to have the types of programs and services in every community that you need to meet the needs. I think when we look at immigrant women in second- and third-tier communities, it becomes that much more complex, that much harder, when we may not have the full robust set of services available to access.

One of the recommendations I would strongly put forward is that when we're looking at the next call around citizenship and immigration, again really look at that mixed service modality to see what it looks like in communities to ensure scalability, to ensure community responsiveness, particularly when we look, for example, at women with very low literacy levels and their opportunity to access language instruction. There may not be enough in the numbers for lower literacy levels, and there may not be a child care program available. What are the other service modalities that we can do? What are the partnerships we can create in order to ensure that those women have the tools they need to ensure that they can integrate? It's critically important for us and more challenging in second- and third-tier communities.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Yes, Mr. Shields.

Prof. John Shields: I agree with what the other speakers have said. I think one of the big challenges is accessing services by women who sort of run out of time and are not able to access especially language training. That's really critical in terms of integrating into Canadian society and the labour market.

The other thing, of course, is that women, and especially immigrant women, do face a dual labour market. There are different types of jobs they tend to be streamed in, and they tend to be far more precarious and to be paid less. We do need services that are tailored to their specific types of needs. Generic services don't always work for women, and I think they have to be tailored to the areas in which they're located. We need to look at them as a specific type of group with specific types of needs.

• (1025)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Would you say child care—

Prof. John Shields: Yes, it's critical. Certainly, in terms of accessing the services, somebody has to take care of the children. If the children are not being cared for, then they're not going to be able to access the services, so this really becomes a critical type of issue.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I would assume it would put a great deal of stress on a family if children are not being cared for.

I heard reference to the need for data and the importance of data collection. I think, Ms. Douglas, you made mention of the mandatory long form census. Has the cancellation of the mandatory long form census created problems—

The Chair: I don't know what this has to do with this study.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, but Ms. Douglas made mention of it, and I just wanted to follow up.

The Chair: Stop the clock for a moment.

I'm just telling you that getting into that discussion has absolutely nothing to do with this study, in my opinion, but proceed and we'll see if it's a long discussion. If it's short, that's fine.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Okay, well thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think we'll leave that to our expert witnesses to determine.

The Chair: No, you'll leave it to the chair to determine.

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

The Chair: You're welcome.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: My question is about the collection of data. Is that important to your ability to provide services to newcomers?

Ms. Debbie Douglas: The mandatory long form census gave us better numbers in terms of specific groups of immigrants and how well they're doing in the labour market. When I talked about the research report "The Colour Coded Labour Market By The Numbers", that was based on the voluntary national household survey. The concern of the researchers was that there's built-in bias, because we know that those who are at the lower economic status and at the higher economic status tend not to fill out surveys unless they are mandatory. It brings some question into who it is that we're missing geographically, but also particularly around issues of race and gender.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Eglinski.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): I'd like to thank the five witnesses for coming here. I really see how you all are very passionate, because when we're watching one person's answer, the others are nodding. You really know your fields. I appreciate the work you do. I think that immigrants who come to your communities are very lucky to have agencies like yours.

I come from rural Alberta. One of the things our government is encouraging is that immigrants become fully part of the Canadian economy and integrate into the communities as soon as possible.

You have the facilities in your communities to give that to people. In the rural communities, whether it be in Ontario, Alberta, or wherever, we don't have facilities like that. On many occasions, we are leaving it up to the employer that hires that person, especially when we bring a person in on the express entry program, where you specialize. We don't have agencies such as yours to go to. We're leaving it to the employer in a lot of cases to give that help to the new person coming into our community.

I'll start with Debbie, and then maybe go to John.

You people probably do some tracking within your organizations. What can we do to assist the immigrants coming into Canada in the outlying communities? Personally, I think that sometimes there are much better economic opportunities for them in coming to smaller communities. What can we do to help support that?

Debbie first, please.

• (1030)

Ms. Debbie Douglas: It's one of the major challenges facing our sector in terms of how we ensure service supports in rural areas, especially as we're wanting immigrants to go where there are good jobs. The conversation has been around the use of technology for distance learning. Then we run into whether or not there are enough things such as bandwidth, and where people will be able to access computers.

The role of public institutions in rural communities becomes even more important in terms of the kinds of support roles they can play in partnering with community service agencies outside of the rural areas so that they're able to at least create the space and the technology whereby the immigrant working there can have access to services from someone in a larger city.

It's still at the early stages. We're not sure how much it will cost. Cost continues to be an issue. Citizenship and Immigration Canada is certainly looking at this, as are the provinces. Ontario is certainly looking at it as we look at how we can populate our northern region, especially given the great hopes we have for our Ring of Fire and wanting to bring immigrants there, but recognizing the need for service supports in those areas.

At OCASI we believe that technology really is the way to go. We have to be looking at the kinds of investments that are required, as well the kinds of partnerships we need to develop with public institutions that are located in those areas already.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Thank you.

Prof. John Shields: I would agree that online services do provide an avenue to enhance supports, so I think they're going to be really critical. However, the human touch is still very much necessary. In smaller communities, there's evidence to suggest that newcomers who are coming to smaller communities actually are doing very well, because they are filling gaps.

This is a really important investment for those communities. This is where I think the municipalities and other types of institutions can play a really important role. Certainly, some of these organizations have tried to create welcoming communities that are trying to attract immigrants and retain immigrants. I think that becomes critical. It's about working with those types of partnerships.

I think employers are very important in this, but they can't do it alone. I think that if it's simply left to the employers, we're not going to have results that would be as satisfactory as if we were to bring the communities right into this.

Again, I agree with Debbie. IT is really important here, but it alone is not going to solve the problem.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Blanchette-Lamothe, please.

[Translation]

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

Ms. Douglas, when Mr. Chan talked about conditional permanent residency, you seemed to have an opinion on that. Would you like to add something? Could this have an impact on the economic integration of women?

[English]

Mr. Chan, you said something about that. I want to know if Madam Douglas has any comments to add, as she was nodding while you were speaking.

Ms. Debbie Douglas: I'm sorry, you'll have to repeat the question.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Yes, no problem.

Ms. Debbie Douglas: I was going to wait while Sherman chats.

• (1035)

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Chan talked about the impact the status of conditional permanent resident can have on sponsored spouses who arrive in Canada. As we know, women are often the ones who must live with that status during the first two years of their life in Canada. Mr. Chan talked about the possible repercussions of that.

Do you have any comments to make on that? I saw that you were nodding while he spoke. I wondered if you wanted to add something.

[English]

Ms. Debbie Douglas: Absolutely, the conditional permanent residence rules that we have disadvantage women. While the government has listened to our concerns around violence against women and has put in an exemption, we know that immigrant women do not have the kinds of information in terms of how it is that they find the kinds of support if violence is happening. Even when it isn't explicit violence, we know that the threat of deportation often keeps women in relationships that are not healthy for them, so we really have to seriously reconsider this whole notion of conditional permanent residency.

It all speaks to the whole temporariness of status that we've been seeing more and more as we've made changes in our immigration program. It means that women are not able to exercise their agency if they need to be dependent on a spouse who has sponsored them and they're having to do everything the spouse says because of fear of deportation if they were to leave the relationship before two years of conjugal cohabitation. It means that we are putting women in unnecessarily vulnerable positions when, in fact, we want women who immigrate to Canada to also meet their full potential to be able to access services when and where they choose, to be able to do the kind of upgrading they may require, or not, to be able to enter the labour market, the job market, as soon as they are able to do that. When you have a system that says, "If I sponsor you to Canada you must stay with me for at least two years or else your status is in jeopardy", that puts an undue burden on the spouse, especially on women who tend to be vulnerable anyway.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Thank you.

A little earlier, you spoke about family reunification and its importance for economic integration. Recently, I met with some people who were demonstrating against delays in family reunification and the sponsorship of people living in Canada, known as "inland sponsorship" in English. The waiting periods have gone from 6 months to 25 months in the last few years. They told me that waiting for a reply for all those months could have repercussions on their partner's entry into the labour market.

What is your opinion regarding the impact of these delays on the sponsors? Since these people are already living in Canada, one would think that they could begin their economic integration into the workplace. Do you think this could have an impact?

[English]

Ms. Debbie Douglas: We've been hearing the stories from sponsored spouses who are already here, but because the process is taking such a long time, they haven't been able to engage with the labour market.

We know that some spouses are choosing to return to their countries of origin, because they can't afford not to work. We know that health care becomes an issue for some folks, because the cost is prohibitive and they're not permanent residents, so they have no access to provincial health care programs. While these are anecdotal, we need to pay attention to it because it begs the question that if we can do express entry and expect to land folks within six months of invitation, why can't we put the same kinds of resources into inland sponsorship of spouses, into family reunifications?

The Canadian Council for Refugees, for example, has a campaign about family reunification linking it to the express entry platform, which is an excellent idea that at least we should be exploring as a country, if we truly believe that family reunification is a cornerstone of social and economic integration of immigrants.

Yes, the long wait times, the lack of transparency in terms of processes; some of the complaints we hear all the time are that folks are just not clear why it is that their spouse is already here and they are waiting 14, 16, 18, 24 months before they are processed through the system.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Douglas.

Mr. Menegakis.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: First of all, I want to state a few points.

I heard some discussion about family reunification and parents and grandparents. Just to set the record straight, since 2012 we have admitted 70,000 parents and grandparents. That's the highest level in two decades of parents and grandparents who have come to Canada. I heard the number 5,000, and that's true. We opened it up in January for 5,000 new applicants as we're dealing with a reduction in the backlogs. That has come down by some 54%. It is a primary focus of ours, and our immigration stream is certainly focusing on that.

There was some discussion about child care provision, particularly for newcomers who are availing themselves of the services that are available at different agencies, to have somewhere to put their children. That is also a focus of our government. I can tell you that I visited the Unemployed Help Centre of Windsor. I did the grand opening of care for newcomer children. That was an addition to the facility, which is basically a day care centre. I had the opportunity to speak to the mothers and fathers who were there learning one of the two official languages, learning how to prepare their resumé, and so forth. I heard how comfortable it made them feel knowing that their children were no more than 30 to 60 seconds away from them being cared for in a fully serviced, and furnished with toys, day care centre right in the facility. It is something we are focusing on, to be sure.

I know that both the Regional Municipality of Durham as well as you, Mr. Chan, in your capacity at your day job with MOSAIC, where I visited and met you, work closely with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. I'm not going to talk to the specifics of funding, because that's not the purpose of this meeting here, but perhaps you can help us by telling us how that relationship is going, how you work with CIC to ensure we are getting the best bang for our dollars that are going out there.

I'll start with Ms. Andrews, and then we'll go to you, Mr. Chan.

• (1040)

Ms. Audrey Andrews: Through the chair, thank you for the question.

Durham region started to receive funding for our LIP in 2009. That money has been leveraged to bring on board other partners who make financial contributions. When I say that we leverage funding in the community, I mean we host an event into which we bring three or four partners. One partner pays for the venue, and another partner pays for catering, let's say, and another partner pays for the printing of the brochure. That return on investment that CIC has made is quite high. So CIC has invested...let's just say it has paid the staff to make this happen, but that staff in turn has turned around and mobilized all of these people to, one, share the vision of collective responsibility, and two, actually throw some money at it and say, "Okay, how do we do a learning event or an information sharing event? How can I contribute?"

Leveraging dollars in the community for our mutual event is a huge return on investment for CIC, as far as I can see. We take those primarily staffing dollars, to be frank, and we turn them into a lot of deliverables that change how the community feels about newcomers and what its responsibility is.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

Mr. Chan.

Mr. Sherman Chan: My experience working in Vancouver with CIC is a good one. First of all, CIC returned to B.C. about a year ago and many of the staff are new. About 50 or 60 new staff members are working with us. They are really responsive. They are quick in replying to our queries. They visit agencies. They come and talk to us and to the clients.

We, and when I say "we" I mean I and my colleagues in the sector, feel that they understand what we are going through and what we are working on. I think it's a good bridging right now with CIC officers. Of course, the funding or call for proposals is beyond the regional level; we understand that. I think that we engage in good discussion about what we are working on and then they support what we do.

The Chair: We finished a round. We're now on the seven-minute rounds, which you will never finish.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: I heard a little about the conditional PR and the impact on spouses who find themselves in abusive relationships. I can tell you this committee is very pleased with the very extensive study we did where we looked at the abuse of women in Canada's immigration system. I believe, Ms. Douglas, you were one of the witnesses who appeared for that study as well.

Certainly in the recommendations in the report of those findings, one of the things we focused on was trying to ensure how we can advise women particularly of their rights here in Canada, because that's where the abuse is mostly happening. They are not obliged to stay in an abusive relationship. In many cases a lot of women do not know their rights here, so they find themselves stuck in that relationship.

It's important for us to inform and educate newcomers before they come to Canada of their rights here, and to know that in this country when you speak up, you get protection.

Many of them, of course, depending on where they come from around the world, are worried about the stigma on them and their families, and how their family is going to be perceived if they leave their spouse. That's not the Canadian way.

We have a bill before the House now, which we're going to be studying in the next few weeks, which deals with another aspect of what we call barbaric practices in certain situations.

It is something we're focusing on, and that's why we took a very long time to study that very issue.

●(1045)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, the government side said it was out of order to discuss the long form census because that wasn't within the scope of this study.

I don't understand why this boasting about a report, which flagrantly ignored the problem of the condition of permanent residence for spouses, is within the scope of our study.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: We never....

The Chair: Mr. Menegakis, do you have a response to that?

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Yes, I do.

He heard the government side say something about the long form census. Perhaps Mr. McCallum's attending a different meeting than I am because I didn't hear anything about the long form census here, sir.

We have the right.... By the way, when you speak, we allow you to speak. You're allowed to say whatever you like, and I have the right to set the record straight on behalf of the government.

The Chair: I think it's a good time to adjourn the meeting.

I want to thank our guests for coming and making their presentations.

This meeting is adjourned.

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