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Chair

Mr. Robert Oliphant

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• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.)): I call to order this meeting, which is the 75th meeting of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

We are considering our order of reference, which was received in November, on a study of immigration to Atlantic Canada, known as motion number M-39.

We welcome our witnesses, who are here to provide their expertise and their thoughts on the fairly critical and important question of attracting and retaining immigrants to Atlantic Canada.

With us today we have two witnesses joining us by video conference, and Mr. Poschmann, who is here in person.

I would like to start with the video conference—and the committee will get to know me—because I've had it disappear from time to time, so let's begin there.

We're going to start with Mr. Dykstra, who is with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, for about seven minutes.

Mr. Reint-Jan Dykstra (Director, Canadian Federation of Agriculture): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members, for this opportunity to speak on immigration in Atlantic Canada. As a representative of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and an immigrant myself, I'm pleased to discuss how critical an effective immigration system is to agriculture and Canada's rural communities.

The CFA is Canada's largest general farm organization, representing 200 farm families. Canada's agrifood sector contributes \$108 billion to Canada's GDP while employing one in eight Canadians.

Canadian agriculture was actually identified as a key growth sector in this year's federal budget, which is targeting growth in agrifood exports to \$75 billion by 2025. This growth is possible only if the agrifood sector continues and can overcome the chronic labour shortages constraining the sector.

A 2015 study conducted by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council identified 59,000 vacancies across Canadian agriculture—a vacancy rate of 7%—while forecasting 114,000 vacancies by 2025, this despite increasing wages and decreasing unemployment in the sector.

These vacancies result in \$1.5 billion in lost sales each year, while also making it harder to transfer farms to the next generation. The

average farmer is over 55 years of age. Uncertain access to labour and a smaller pool of experienced workers make finding the next generation all the more difficult. Estimates suggest that over \$50 billion of farm assets needs to change hands over the next decade. Finding the right people to continue farming is critical to continued growth in the sector.

Therefore, immigration is critical to the future of our industry.

First I would like to briefly discuss my own background to give you a better sense of where I'm coming from. We—my parents and younger brother—came to Canada in 1979, after exploring many avenues in Europe. The Netherlands was too small to allow for expansion to sustain three families. We started in Canada with one farm, milking 30 cows. Today, together with my wife Bethany and three of our four sons, we operate three farms and milk 300 cows while employing four full-time employees. We have experience in hiring and we know it is not easy.

For many farmers across Canada, the continued inability to recruit Canadian workers has required them to look abroad. This often requires access to international workers as a last resort when extensive efforts to find Canadians have failed. This occurs for a number of reasons.

Agriculture is located primarily in remote rural parts of Canada. This limits the availability of local labour, as rural populations continue to stagnate and, in many regions, decline.

My home province of New Brunswick is a clear example. New Brunswick's population has declined by half a per cent since 2011. Even in the previous five years, which saw a 2.9% population growth in the province, that growth was uneven across the province. While some southern New Brunswick cities and towns experienced double-digit growth, less populated communities in the north saw continued declines. This is particularly true of the youth, with many leaving the province for post-secondary school and not returning, posing a significant challenge for agricultural businesses.

The remote locations, combined with perishability and seasonality, create an extremely challenging labour environment.

This is why the CFA supports funding for the Canadian agriculture and agrifood workforce action plan, a multi-faceted strategy to improve access to our domestic workforce with a national career initiative while also improving access to international workers and new Canadians.

At this point, if Canadians are not available, farmers' only alternative is foreign workers, for both seasonal and full-time permanent positions. Despite approximately 50% of agricultural jobs being year-round, there is no clear pathway to permanent residency, because agricultural skills and labour needs are not prioritized within Canadian immigration programs. Express entry is geared towards high-skilled candidates, despite the pressing need for workers in the agrifood sector, who are generally considered low- or semi-skilled. While some food processing employees have come in through express entry, any chance of obtaining permanent residency was shut down in 2016 when job offers were reduced from 500 points to only 60. Combined with other skill requirements, any chance to bring in agriculture or agrifood workers through the program was lost.

At the same time, provincial nominee programs vary considerably. Some are open to farm workers, but most offer no avenue to permanent residency for our sector. The CFA strongly encourages this committee to expand its analysis across Canada, because the rural immigration issues facing Atlantic Canada affect agriculture and food across Canada.

• (0855)

On the Atlantic immigration pilot, one of the most pressing labour needs of the sector is for general farm workers, which are categorized as NOC level C. While they are eligible under the pilot, a lack of awareness amongst farm employers has limited the uptake, with provincial outreach focusing on higher-skilled professions.

Farmers also find it challenging to identify experienced farm workers who meet the education and language requirements, despite a wealth of motivated and experienced candidates. Many international farm workers, despite having extensive agricultural experience, do not have high school diplomas. At the same time, while they can often meet the language requirements for listening and speaking, a level 4 in writing and reading is rare because of the limited use of these skills in many farm settings. Limited uptake on the part of farm workers is directly tied to these challenges.

At the same time, there is a broader disconnect between new Canadians and the opportunities that exist in agriculture and in rural Canada. With settlement services primarily located in large urban centres, employment in agriculture is disconnected from many Canadians, particularly the recent influx of refugees, who often have agrarian backgrounds.

To address these challenges, the CFA proposes the following: first, given the industry's significant labour needs, identify agriculture as a target for the pilot and for broader immigration policy; second, introduce flexibility within eligibility criteria to accommodate unique agricultural skills requirements, which often extend beyond traditional education, while allowing for additional time to meet language criteria; and finally, implement the Canadian agriculture and agrifood workforce action plan as a long-term road map to address agriculture's chronic labour shortages.

Canada requires a long-term rural immigration strategy to ensure immigration policy can capitalize on rural employment opportunities. This begins with pilots like the Atlantic immigration pilot, but requires further support for industry-led pilot projects and research that can help integrate new Canadians by bringing settlement agencies together with agricultural stakeholders.

I thank you for your time.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP)):
Thank you very much, Mr. Dykstra.

We'll go next to Mr. Campbell via video conference.

Mr. Campbell, you have seven minutes.

Mr. David Campbell (President, Jupia Consultants Inc., As an Individual): Thank you.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak before the committee. I am currently the president of a private economic development consulting firm here in New Brunswick, but I was previously the chief economist with the New Brunswick Jobs Board Secretariat. In that role, we spent an awful lot of time thinking about immigration, looking at the data, and trying to understand the best path forward. We had some influence in the Atlantic immigration pilot, and we think a lot of what was done under that program has been successful. We think there is potential for enhancing that even further.

I know that your committee has heard a lot of data, so I'm just going to zoom in on a couple of specific points that I want to raise, which you may or may not have heard yet.

The first is around the shrinking regional labour market. Across the Atlantic Canada labour market, the number of people working or looking for work peaked in 2012 and has been dropping ever since. Between 2012 and 2016, it's down by about 29,000. At the same time, the labour force across the country—the total number of people working or looking for work—has expanded by 600,000.

If you look closely at that 600,000, you'll see that 624,000 landed immigrants have been added to the national workforce, while the workforce number for those born in Canada has shrunk by 27,000, so there are more people who were born in Canada leaving the labour market every year than there are joining the labour market. Across the country, immigration on a net basis accounts for all of the workforce growth across the country.

We need to be thinking about the national context when we look at Atlantic Canada. If you look at the younger population, those between the ages of 25 and 44, you see that the workforce in Atlantic Canada peaked way back in 1990 and has declined by 124,000 people since then.

In the information I sent to the committee in advance, I show a direct correlation between GDP growth over time and workforce growth. In the 1970s and 1980s, there were thousands of people added to the workforce every year, and that provided the talent for entrepreneurs and industries to expand and for GDP to grow. As that workforce has been shrinking, the GDP growth in New Brunswick specifically has been close to zero, and actually, on an average annual basis, it is 0.3% since 2009. Our GDP growth has been flatlining, and that has a lot to do with the labour market.

I would argue that this is probably the biggest public policy challenge facing Atlantic Canada, at least in our lifetime. All of the other initiatives, such as the supercluster initiative and all of the other important initiatives being done by provincial and federal governments, will not be successful unless we can get the labour market growing again.

This is a huge challenge. I estimate that we need roughly 150,000 new people through immigration over the next 15 to 20 years in New Brunswick, and that kind of boost in immigration hasn't been seen since the mid-19th century as a share of the population. We don't have a track record and we don't have the infrastructure in place to support that, so we have to do a lot more federally, provincially, and locally to take this issue seriously and to make sure that not only are we attracting new immigrants aligned with workforce needs but that we're also doing whatever we can to retain them.

The second point I want to raise this morning with you is this issue of what I call "levelling the playing field". Large urban centres across the country that have a history and a track record on immigration have integrated immigrants well into their workforce over the years. You will see in the documentation I sent you that over 50% of those working in the Toronto administrative services sector are immigrants, and 76% of those working in manufacturing and utilities occupations in Toronto are immigrants. In New Brunswick, that number is 3%.

In the big centres across the country, there's a long track record of hiring and integrating immigrants into the workforce. We don't have that here, but the bigger issue is that these employers are hiring immigrants off the street. This is a big distinction, and it is one that we ran into when we started rolling out the Atlantic immigration pilot.

We went to the national and international firms that are based in places such as Moncton and Saint John and said that we had a deal for them. We said that we would allow them to recruit internationally and bring workers into their facilities in Moncton or Saint John or wherever in the province.

● (0900)

These firms responded that they hire a lot of immigrants in Toronto and Montreal and in their facilities in Calgary and Vancouver, but they don't have to recruit them internationally. They're recruiting them off the street. They said that we were asking

them to undertake an additional hurdle in doing their recruiting in eastern Europe or in Asia or South America.

This has been a bit of a challenge. We have to figure out how to make attracting workers to important industries in Atlantic Canada as easy as possible. I understand that we can't flood in tens of thousands of people who don't have jobs and just hope that they attach to the labour market, but we certainly have to do a better job.

This is a national issue. Look at it across the country. Since 2010, the largest urban centres of the country have seen very robust employment growth, while mid-sized and small urban centres have seen very weak employment growth. That's from Sarnia and Thunder Bay right across the country, for the most part, so this is an issue that's facing not just Atlantic Canada but the entire country.

The last point I want to make here in my introductory remarks is what I call "addressing the elephant in the room". I know there are a lot of folks who think that because the labour market participation rate is relatively low in New Brunswick and across Atlantic Canada, there should be more workers here to work at the jobs that are available. In fact, I think there is some potential for that, but for the most part, if you can't find workers locally—if an employer in good faith tries to recruit locally, pays competitive wages, and can't find workers—we shouldn't be putting them at a disadvantage.

If you look at the labour market participation rate among the population aged 25 to 54, the core labour market, you'll see that it's actually as high in Atlantic Canada as it is across the country, if not higher. Look at urban centre labour market participation rates. Again, they're very similar. I have charts in the documentation I sent to you that show this. The labour market participation rate in urban centres is as high as it is in other urban centres across the country, if not higher.

We do have a higher share of our population that collects employment insurance every year. That is an issue. It's not something that... Anyway, the bottom line is that when it comes to employment insurance, there are people who use that program because of the seasonal nature of some of our industries, and we shouldn't use that as an excuse not to make sure that we have workers for key industries. Again, part of this is an urban-rural issue. In most urban centres across Atlantic Canada, the EI usage rate is as low as the national average.

I would just urge you, when you look at this issue, to understand it at a strategic level in terms of the importance of immigration in the long term. Look at it from a very specific export and strategic industry perspective, because if we can't find workers for those industries—and agriculture is certainly a very strategic industry for the region—and those industries actually start to decline, their investment in this region.... By the way, they are doing that: a number of firms in Atlantic Canada have moved operations to places like Toronto and Chicago. They could access workers with the same wage rates they were paying down here more cheaply in the larger urban centres. If you go to those facilities, you'll see that almost all the workers are immigrants.

We need to have a little more nuanced understanding of the challenge here, I think, and a nuanced understanding of the opportunity. We need to make sure we put this issue front and centre, because the rest of it, all of the other things we do—the investments we make in post-secondary, superclusters, and roads and infrastructure—won't matter if we don't have the people who are able and willing to work in the industries we have down in this part of the country.

I think I'll leave it at that and take any questions you might have.

• (0905)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Campbell.

Go ahead, Mr. Poschmann.

Mr. Finn Poschmann (President and Chief Executive Officer, Atlantic Provinces Economic Council): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Am I on now?

The Chair: Yes, you are.

Mr. Finn Poschmann: Thank you to the committee for the kind invitation to address an issue profoundly important to me and to my region. As a disclaimer, for the record, I work for an independent, non-partisan think tank, a charity. I don't speak for any government and may not speak for my board or our members.

As a starting point—and we've heard a lot about it—the overarching imperative for the Atlantic region with respect to immigration is that we need more of it.

In the Atlantic region, natural population growth slowed a lot in the early 1990s and turned negative during 2012. Since 1991, the Atlantic provinces' annual population growth rate has averaged 0%, and the total population growth has necessarily been zero over that period. Together with demographic aging, this makes sustaining public finances, pensions, and services very difficult for all of us.

The natural rate of population increase depends on the lifetime fertility rate of provincial residents. Because the Atlantic provinces' total fertility rate is lower than the Canadian average—and trends in fertility don't shift easily—immigration is tremendously more important to future population growth in the region than it is elsewhere.

Immigration, even many levels higher than Canada has seen in recent decades, cannot meaningfully change the age structure of the Canadian population. In the Atlantic, however, even a small number of immigrants who are attracted and retained can make an important difference to population growth trends.

In 2014-2015, Atlantic Canada accounted for 6.6% of the total Canadian population, but only 3.2% of new immigrants. Were Atlantic Canada to have matched the Canadian average for immigrant attraction and retention relative to the resident population over any sustained period in recent decades, the region's population growth rate would be trending upward, rather than flat or down.

In other words, a few thousand people goes a long way in the region, and the Atlantic immigration pilot program the federal government announced earlier this year is indeed welcome.

What's the catch?

Mr. Campbell touched on it. It's not news that economic growth in the region has been sluggish. Among Canada's 10 provinces, for instance, the Atlantic four have recently had the highest unemployment rates, above 8%, and they typically have the lowest employment-to-population ratios overall, including urban and rural areas.

Rural residents in the region, like many in the rest of Canada, tend to look at the levels of unemployment and underemployment, and wonder, "Where is the case for more bodies?" I've had federal officials say the same thing to me. Implicitly or even explicitly, the story is that more immigrants must equal more unemployment and a higher employment insurance bill or a higher provincial social assistance bill.

Employers see this rather differently. They search everywhere for skilled bodies, for the knowledge and experience they need, and they routinely find themselves looking outside. This scenario plays itself out across the region, urban and rural, for large and small businesses, and it plays out across the full range of skills, from the low end of the skill range to the high end.

The role of the labour market impact assessment with respect to temporary foreign workers remains dubious. Where required, the LMIA requires potential employers to prove a negative—that no Canadian worker is available to do the job. This is a rather pedantic bureaucratic exercise, and this policy prescription is past its expiry date. Efforts instead should go to developing routes to permanent residency and eventual citizenship, and the Atlantic pilot is an example of how to test approaches to this issue.

Meanwhile, for many employers and in many communities, access to fresh bodies is their number one concern. When I talk to small businesses and large businesses, and I say, "What's your issue?," it's absolutely universal: it's getting bodies. This does speak to the likely success of the immigration pilot from a hiring perspective.

As indicated in the background material, which you may have, prepared by our director of research, David Chaundy, early data indicate that people are showing up. As I said, a few thousand people in the Atlantic provinces goes a long way in percentage terms. It takes surprisingly few of them to offset the decline in the fertility rates, especially in P.E.I. That's good news.

• (0910)

Our report also indicates that the provinces have had success in taking up most of the available slots within the provincial nominee program, through 2016 at least, with solid numbers for the Maritimes through the first seven months of 2017—in other words, through July. That's good, even if it raises a question this committee might like to ponder: why are there numeric limits on the PNP, the provincial nominee program? I can't come up with any answers that make economic sense to me.

There is more on the good news front. A decade ago I would have been quite concerned that successive waves of immigrants were not catching up economically at the pace they had previously to be on an employment par with native-born Canadians or prior immigrants. Recent data suggests that while this remains a concern, it may not be a growing one. It's looking better. Immigrants find work, or they create it. They start businesses; it's natural. They pay taxes. For many of us from immigrant families, and that includes me, nothing seems more natural than to seek to create something in a new country, something that wasn't there before. That is good for all of us.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I think my time is up. I thank you for yours.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Just before we turn to the questioning, I want to welcome three students who are joining us and watching our committee work today from Glebe Collegiate Institute and Bell High School.

Welcome. We will be on our best behaviour because we're being watched by students. This is, as you know, the citizenship and immigration committee. Just so you know, on this side we have government members, on this side we have opposition members, and in this committee we take turns asking questions.

We will begin with a government MP, Ms. Zahid.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses.

My first question is for Mr. Campbell.

At our meeting yesterday, we heard from Cape Breton councillor Amanda McDougall that while there was excellent access to settlement and other support services in major centres such as Halifax, smaller communities, such as Cape Breton, were having much more difficulty with retention. People who wanted to stay could not get access to the help they needed. Does this track with your experience? Do you have suggestions on how to address this regional inequality?

Mr. David Campbell: The first challenge is that a lot of these immigrants are coming without actual jobs. We need to do a better job of matching the job opportunities in the community to the immigrant population that's coming in. That's the first thing we need to do.

The second thing we need to do is a better job of retaining these immigrants. I think that is a challenge for a small community, because it doesn't have the kind of ethnocultural community groups, infrastructure, and ecosystem to support them. I think we need to

target specific countries and do a better job of trying to cluster our immigrant populations so that they can have a little bit of critical mass in terms of a population base, even in small communities. We certainly need to do a better job of retention by integrating them into the communities, looking more closely at churches and civic groups and the role they play, and also looking at the settlement services. As my colleague said, in smaller areas, settlement services tend to not be as developed as they are in the urban centres. We need to do a better job of that.

This starts fundamentally with an economic base. A lot of the immigrants who come to Atlantic Canada—the ones who leave—don't have a solid economic foundation. They get all the points. They get to come to the province or the region, but they don't actually have a job or an economic opportunity along with that. They don't necessarily attach properly to the labour market, which was the main reason, by the way, for the Atlantic immigration pilot. We had economists from Romania working in call centres because they passed all the tests and got all the points they needed to come to Canada, but they couldn't find a job in New Brunswick. If you want a call centre worker, go find somebody with the skills; don't go find an economist. That is an actual example.

Even in Cape Breton we need to do a better job of finding specific job opportunities for these immigrants even before they arrive. We can use the school system better, use the community college system and the university system as a conduit for new immigrants to integrate into the community. I think there is a lot more we can do.

• (0915)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: If people are coming from different ethnic communities, are there areas where they are given help to integrate into their own ethnic communities, communities with the languages they can speak more fluently?

Mr. David Campbell: Again, in smaller communities, that's more difficult. In larger areas like Halifax and Moncton, we're seeing that happening a lot more. We're actually seeing churches and other groups catering to specific ethnic communities. In smaller areas like Cape Breton, it might be more of a challenge, but it is fundamental.

That's why I said this is the biggest public policy challenge of our time, because it's going to take a major effort. We put lots of effort into certain areas, but I don't think we're putting enough effort into this one. Even with the Atlantic immigration pilot, unless it's changed.... It didn't come with any new federal dollars.

In reality we need to think about how we fund immigration. I like to say it costs \$250,000 to take somebody born in New Brunswick to the point where they enter the labour market. If you bring in an immigrant, the cost to get them into the labour market is almost nothing, so if we have to spend \$10,000 or \$20,000 or \$30,000 in public dollars to get that immigrant effectively integrated into society, it's still cheaper than a native-born Canadian. I understand the facetious nature of that comment, but it's an interesting point as we look at how we develop labour markets in the country.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: I know that a number of years ago some IRCC offices in Atlantic Canada were closed. I understand that P.E.I. is still without an IRCC office. Has this lack of services and on-the-ground presence impacted your relationship with IRCC and the department's understanding of the immigration challenges in that region?

Mr. David Campbell: I think it has. They closed their office in Moncton as well, and Moncton is attracting more immigrants than any other part of New Brunswick. In my opinion, doing that was a mistake. You need to have these people on the ground to understand the challenges and to be able to work directly with the immigrants in local communities. Anywhere there's a concentration of immigrants, we need to have those federal facilities.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: The next question is for Mr. Dykstra. Earlier in our study we heard from a number of witnesses, including Jordi Morgan from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and former New Brunswick premier Mr. Frank McKenna, that it would be desirable to find a way to link temporary foreign workers to this program to provide them both a path to permanent residency and a recognition that they are already here and working and are more likely to be retained. Is that something that you see as both feasible and desirable? Do you see any challenges with that?

Mr. Reint-Jan Dykstra: Of course it is very desirable to do that and to take that path. The one opportunity that is lacking, again, has to do with the services the rural areas have. If they come to a rural area....

I'll use my hometown, Salisbury, as an example. We are 20 minutes away from Moncton. These folks, when they come as temporary foreign workers, are usually housed by the farmer, so they don't have to find housing to begin with, but then they're still a long way away from the facilities that can help them overcome their first few years.

What we have seen over the years is that certain ethnic communities come to New Brunswick, stay for a few years, and then migrate to central Canada, where there are larger centres for their ethnic communities. That is frustrating as heck, because just when you get acquainted with them, they leave, unfortunately. For that reason it is urgent that we let the temporary foreign workers stay but that more money be used and invested in retaining them in the rural and smaller communities.

If you look at Ontario, you see the ethnic communities everywhere. Unfortunately, in Atlantic Canada you hardly see them. They have huge difficulties in staying in this area because of the lack of people in their own ethnic community.

When I first came here, there was nothing in my area either. Now, we chose to do that, and we all make choices. I wanted to be

absorbed into the Canadian system as quickly as I could, so we left our past behind. At the same time, a lot of the ethnic communities want to retain a lot of what they have done and what they do and want to pass that on to their children.

● (0920)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Zahid.

We'll move to Mr. Saroya.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Chair, thank you so much, and thank you to the panel for coming.

We all want Atlantic Canada to do well. We all want Atlantic provinces to do well. We all want more immigration. We all want to make sure we go back to the 1966 level of 10% of the Canadian population. At the same time, we want to make sure that we keep the people we bring, that we have jobs for them, that we have a plan, that we have a system to keep them.

I'll tell you a personal experience. A few years back, I met somebody who immigrated to Manitoba. He couldn't find anything there. His address was in Manitoba, but in the meantime he was looking for a job in Toronto.

Mr. Dykstra, you threw out lots of numbers, such as the 59,000 vacancies and so on. As you are aware, the tax changes and the tax vacating under private corporations that the Liberals have under way will obviously cause drastic changes in the agriculture sector. Your organization outlined the following: "The proposed changes will increase complexity and uncertainty to any farm business that has incorporated, which represents 25% of all farm businesses across Canada." Could you please speak to how these changes will have a negative impact on Atlantic Canada's economy and on keeping those migrant workers in Atlantic Canada?

Mr. Reint-Jan Dykstra: With regard to retaining and investing in farms, every one of us invests on a daily basis, regardless of the tax system at play. We have to learn to live with the tax system, including how it's implemented and how the shortcomings of the tax system work. We try to alleviate those through working with the tax system in a fashion that is fruitful for each of the individual entrepreneurs.

Basically, not having those 59,000 people working on the farms where they could potentially be working is a lot more costly, whether they are skilled or low-skilled or unskilled. The cost is exorbitant. As stated in my presentation, \$1.5 billion worth of losses could have been earned and could have stayed in the country. Now we import all the product that normally would have been produced within the country. That is where the shortcoming comes in. That is where our tax dollars have to come to work: how can we alleviate that shortcoming of \$1.5 billion?

If you as a committee are serious about alleviating this problem in all of Canada, but specifically in Atlantic Canada, I encourage you to find ways to retain the numbers of people we require in Atlantic Canada and in Canada as a whole. If we can keep them here, we can basically then make money with those individuals, and those who have the desire to come can have a future here in Canada for themselves and their children.

● (0925)

Mr. Bob Saroya: Thank you.

To Mr. Campbell or Mr. Poschmann, the energy east pipeline was cancelled as of last week. The Liberal federal taxes are going up, including increases in CPP and a carbon tax. In the provinces of P.E. I., Newfoundland, and New Brunswick, the PST, I believe, or the provincial tax, has gone up to 10%. The total HST is 15%. All new migrants coming to any new place mostly work for lower wages, and sometimes for minimum wage. Please, how will this affect bringing people back to Atlantic Canada?

Mr. Finn Poschmann: I'm happy to take that.

There's no question that the Atlantic provinces are high-tax provinces relative to most of the others, and some of them have backed themselves into difficult fiscal situations. On the other hand, notwithstanding some history, Nova Scotia, for instance, is cruising with a balanced budget. P.E.I. is near there, and New Brunswick is not that far off. The influences in Newfoundland and Labrador are a little different, mostly oriented towards oil.

The no-go decision with respect to energy east was primarily market-driven. A secondary reason was regulatory barriers. It's unfortunate for the province of New Brunswick. Things may change in the future, or they may not. Time will tell.

With your permission, I'll speak on the urban-rural question. Think of population centres as gravity centres. The bigger the population, the bigger the gravitational pull. That includes neighbourhoods that have a particular ethnic focus. It is always going to be the case that population centres will attract more people more readily and more easily than a rural area simply because that's where the opportunities are and that's where the higher wages tend to be.

Meanwhile, in the resource sector and in the agriculture sector, it's a competitive world. The resource firms, as well as farms and the agriculture sector, have had to boost their productivity to stay competitive. They automate their processes and they hire fewer people than they used to. They still need people, but there's no question that there's a long-term economic draw away from rural areas to the centre.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Thank you, Mr. Poschmann.

Before I introduce a motion, I want to make sure what you think the impact would be if, pursuant to standing order 108(2), the committee immediately undertook a study of no less than two meetings on the proposed changes to the tax system outlined in the government's consultation entitled "Tax Planning Using Private Corporations" as publicly released on July 18, 2017, in order to assess the potential impact on the government's proposal with regards to immigrants, small business owners, and self-employed immigrants.

How would this affect your communities?

The Chair: I believe you're presenting that as a motion.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: He's presenting it as a question.

Mr. Bob Saroya: It's just a question.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: He did not move the motion.

The Chair: You're not moving a motion?

Mr. Bob Saroya: No.

The Chair: You have four seconds to respond.

Mr. Finn Poschmann: I am sure the committee will make the finest, wisest choice available to it.

The Chair: Ms. Kwan is next.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for your presentations.

What I'm hearing, I think from everybody, is the issue around immigration and the need for immigration for Canada to sustain our economy in a variety of different sectors.

The government is gearing up for November 1 to table the immigration levels numbers we will be expecting next year. I wonder, in this context, if you would agree that we need to increase the immigration levels numbers from our current 300,000 level to a higher level. By way of context, the former minister, John McCallum, had an expert advisory panel that gave him advice, and the advice was that the immigration levels should increase to 450,000 over five years. That was back in 2016.

I wonder if I could get a quick answer from around the table, starting with Mr. Dykstra.

● (0930)

Mr. Reint-Jan Dykstra: I cannot speak on numbers, but that the immigration levels should increase is a definite yes.

Mr. David Campbell: I think we need to get there. I'm not sure we need to get there in the very short term, but ultimately the immigration levels in Atlantic Canada need to get up to at least 1% of the population, which is where they are now nationally. I think they're going to have to get closer to 1.5% or maybe 2%, which would require significantly more.

What we're seeing now in the provinces is much more competition for immigration. I'd like to see more thought given to developing those national targets based on regional and local priorities. As I said before, a lot of the small and mid-sized urban centres across the country are starting to feel the challenges associated with the shrinking labour market. You're going to need more immigrants in North Bay, Sarnia, Thunder Bay, and across the country. I think that eventually, in the fairly short term, we're going to have to get to that number of 425,000 or 450,000.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much.

Mr. Poschmann, go ahead.

Mr. Finn Poschmann: Thank you for the question.

The challenge isn't with the particular level or target number but with hitting it. Certainly we would like to see a bigger number, and we would like to see the bigger number achieved.

It's only in recent years that the Atlantic provinces have woken up to the need for immigration. It's good to see some improvement, but we have a very long way to go. Ramping up to 450,000 nationally in the short term would be a challenge, but if we could do it, that would be great.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Okay. Thank you.

We used to have programs in our Canadian immigration system such as the Canadian experience class, the federal skilled workers class, and the skilled trades class. More and more, over the years, people have veered towards one sector of the immigrant population.

I heard from a variety of different places, including the panel today, that we actually need a full spectrum of low-skilled, medium-skilled, and highly skilled workers to come to Canada. Right now, our immigration system does not reflect that need. It tends to skew towards one area. Hence, we are not meeting the labour demands. In the agriculture industry, for example, people come as temporary foreign workers, but it sounds to me, from what Mr. Dykstra said, that we actually need a pathway for these individuals to come as permanent residents.

I would like the presenters to expand on this a little, in terms of a change in our immigration policy. Should we be changing our immigration policy to reflect that need for a range of workers, as we used to have previously?

Mr. Dykstra, we'll start with you.

Mr. Reint-Jan Dykstra: Yes, I would agree with that 100%.

It's the same thing that we had when we first came to Canada. In the investor group, you basically were allowed to come in on a somewhat fast-tracked approach. We should do the same thing now with the lower-skilled immigration levels when there is a need for it. We can see there is a significant need for it because of the need for temporary foreign workers.

Yes, I would wholeheartedly concur, but I repeat that it also needs backup in the rural areas from the government so that in the rural areas there is a support system in place for these newcomers.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

I want to build on the question around a support system.

Mr. Campbell, I think you mentioned it in terms of investment. If you bring in a new population of people, you need to have the infrastructure to support people to integrate into the community and to be successful in the community. Since you touched on that idea, what do you think the government should do in terms of infrastructure in the Atlantic provinces?

• (0935)

Mr. David Campbell: I'd like them to spend a little more money, not just federal but also provincial and even local. As I said before, it takes a lot more money and a much longer period of time to bring

somebody from birth into the labour market than it does to bring an immigrant. If we're talking about the cost, it's going to be a lot less to bring an immigrant in. I don't have a number for you today. I would like to see more money invested in our communities, particularly in areas where the ecosystem for immigration is not that developed, to make sure there is a kick-start there to get this infrastructure in place to support these immigrants as they settle.

To come back to your point, I think there is a difference between large urban centres and the rest of the country. In large urban centres, the immigrant population is distributed across the labour market in service industries, in manufacturing, and in higher-skill areas, but if you look at small urban centres and places like Atlantic Canada, you see that immigrants have historically been clustered in highly skilled occupations and in immigrant investor categories. That's because of family-class immigration, refugees, and all the other categories that have benefited the large urban centres more than the small urban centres.

In a place like Toronto or Vancouver, you'll see immigrants distributed across the labour market, but not in a place like Moncton or Halifax.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I want to bring us to the next issue, which is refugees.

We have had previous panels from the Atlantic provinces come in to talk about the desire to increase refugees into the Atlantic provinces as well. In fact, the UNHCR just sent a letter to our committee suggesting a model related to that.

In terms of resettlement of refugees, would it be desirable for the Atlantic provinces to also see an increase in refugee resettlement numbers in those regions?

The Chair: Please be very brief.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I will start with Mr. Campbell.

Mr. David Campbell: Yes, I think so, but remember that they take much more time and effort to integrate into society and into the labour market because they're not coming as economic immigrants. They normally don't have the language skills. They don't have the specific labour market skills per se. I think more refugees would be good for the region, but you have to understand that the time and effort required to integrate them into the labour market will be much greater than for economic immigrants.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Lockhart is next.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses today. You each bring a very interesting perspective to this conversation.

Mr. Dykstra, you mentioned CFA's workforce development plan. Is that something that could be submitted to the committee to include in our evidence? Could you provide that, Mr. Dykstra?

Mr. Reint-Jan Dykstra: Absolutely.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Okay, great.

I also want to talk to you about succession planning for farms and whether you think there's a role for immigration. We'll use farming as an example, but our other witnesses might want to talk about that as well in the context of other business succession planning.

Could you give me your perspective?

Mr. Reint-Jan Dykstra: Succession planning takes a long time and usually it does not start on the day you want to move the farm over to the next generation or to a newcomer or to a local. It doesn't matter who. Succession planning starts basically when you start farming and you start thinking about your vision for the future.

When Bethany and I started farming and got married and our first son was born, the idea was that in all likelihood he would inherit the farm unless he wanted to do something different. Then numbers two, three, and four came along, and it became more difficult.

However, at that time you are already making all your plans. This is not a last-moment plan. It's the same thing with all businesses; it is a long-term goal. You have to go with the flow when Minister Morneau makes an announcement that he wants to change the tax system for small businesses. Whether they are incorporated or they are sole proprietorships, it all has an effect. That's why everything needs to be taken into context. If you want to change something, keep in the back of your mind that a lot of people have depended on the system that we had, so consider what the impact will be. That is what we are asking for.

It would be the same thing if I expanded my farm. There would be an impact on the labour force, and I would have to see if I could find enough people locally to do the labour. Unfortunately, just because the labour market is at 10% unemployment does not necessarily mean there is 10% of the labour force available to do my farm work. The real truth is that there might be 2% or maybe 1%, because we have been shipping out our youngsters. I'm sorry to say this, and it may sound a little harsh and it may sound a little more farm-like, but we have shipped them out west left, right, and centre. What we have left are the ones who are less able to do the work that we require them to do.

The numbers are high, and for that reason we should get accustomed to that. We need to bring that into line, basically through population growth, so that the 10% number becomes a smaller percentage of the population.

• (0940)

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Thank you.

Mr. Campbell, from your perspective, how important is immigration in business succession?

Mr. David Campbell: I think it's very important. I think we can be far more strategic about immigrant investment into the region.

When I came to Moncton, there was one sushi restaurant. Now there about 20. I'm not kidding. The reality is that immigrant investors come in, and many times they do what they know. We could be more intelligent about that in terms of matching the immigrant investor to potential business succession opportunities.

Cavendish, P.E.I., has benefited from substantial Asian investment over the years. Many of those businesses have been rejuvenated through immigrant investments into P.E.I. I think we can do that, find those business owners, in our tourism sector and in many sectors around the province.

The transition takes a while. I don't know if it takes a whole lifetime, as my colleague said, but it could take a year or two. We need to have a mechanism whereby the potential buyer of a new business can shadow the current owner and take part in the business for a while to see if there's a fit. There's a lot more work we could do to plan or structure that. It's definitely a big opportunity.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Do we have any numbers, either from you, Mr. Campbell, or from Mr. Poschmann, on the number of businesses that will transition in Atlantic Canada? Do we know those numbers?

Mr. Finn Poschmann: I believe the rough number is "a lot".

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Finn Poschmann: I don't know if David has one that's a little more specific.

Mr. David Campbell: There are 40,000 businesses in New Brunswick. With the aging demographic, I would suspect that a pretty big share of those are close to transitioning. Accounting firms tell me that here in Moncton they have been dealing with that. It has multiplied in their business in terms of those who are trying to figure out how to sell their business and capitalize on the equity in their business. I can't give you a number, but it's definitely in the hundreds every year, and definitely in the thousands over a five- and 10-year period.

Mr. Finn Poschmann: Anecdotally, there are the same comments from lawyers as there are from tax accountants.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Okay.

Mr. Campbell, I also wanted to talk you about how Atlantic Canada has an abundance of post-secondary schools for the size of our region. Do you think that's something we can leverage to attract more people to the area?

Mr. David Campbell: Yes. In a perfect world, every immigrant would come through the post-secondary system, either the college or the university system, because they would then be accredited with a Canadian degree or diploma. They would have had the time to put up with our winters for two or three or four years. They'd really understand if they wanted to settle down to life in Atlantic Canada.

I think we can do a lot more. I'd like to be even more specific in terms of our targeting. If we need 50 workers in IT, I'd like to go to Romania or the Philippines and say to them to come and take this program at the community college, and that while there's no guarantee of a job, there are jobs at the other end of their training in the sectors of demand in Atlantic Canada. Certainly I'd love to see the community college system and the university system used much more as a direct conduit for new immigration.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: The flip side of that, Mr. Dykstra, is what I think I understand you saying, which is that we also need a stream for less skilled labour to make sure that area is targeted as well. Is that correct?

Mr. Reint-Jan Dykstra: That's correct.

Of course, you don't pick low-skilled people... There are low-skilled people who want to have opportunities as well, and those are the ones you want to ask. You want to tell them that if they want to come to Canada, there is room for them here, instead of picking out you, you, and you. No, no; you allow low-skilled people to come and you inform them that there is work and a need for them here.

To go back to succession, when farmers talk about succession, most of the time it is succession within their family. That is why it takes a long time to pass the farm on to another individual as a completed sale. It happens, and it happens on a regular basis. On that, yes, I concur with Mr. Campbell fully that it doesn't have to take a lifetime. That can take sometimes only a month. It just depends on what the desires and the needs are.

At the same time, in farming as a whole, we are in a family-oriented business. Whether it is dairy, grain, or anything along those lines, that is how it works. It is usually family that takes over. For that reason, I was more focused on the family transition than succession to a third party—

● (0945)

The Chair: I'm afraid I need to ask you to wind up. We're coming to the end of the session.

Mr. Reint-Jan Dykstra: Basically what I wanted to say is that when there is sufficient cash coming across, it doesn't take time. When there is little cash coming in, that is when it takes time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you to all our witnesses. That ends our first panel for today.

We'll take a brief moment as we pause and switch panels. Thank you for joining us here and from Moncton.

● (0945)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (0950)

The Chair: We're going to come back to order. Thank you to our witnesses for waiting. They are Mr. Jose Rivera from St. John's, Newfoundland, and Mr. Laurent Martel from Statistics Canada.

We'll begin with Mr. Rivera. You have about seven minutes to address the committee. We thank you for joining us.

Mr. Jose Rivera (Executive Director, Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Council): Thank you very much from St. John's. I am very honoured to be part of this committee.

My wife and I came to Canada in 2002 as refugees, thanks to Canadian generosity. In 2004 I joined the Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Council in St. John's, which is a charity helping immigrants and refugees and Canadians as well. We deal mainly with issues pertaining to immigration, as well as anything from employment all the way to health, education, housing, and whatnot.

From my experience, our main issue in Newfoundland is that we don't have access—we are a small organization—to core funding, some funding that could help small organizations to thrive and help newcomers to be part of the community. We have been working with donations and small grants, but still we feel really discouraged that there is no support for small organizations.

Here in Newfoundland and Labrador, our newcomer population is not as big as in other provinces. We feel that the low retention here is due mainly to the lack of information and access to services once you are outside of the mandate of the federally funded immigration service that is provided.

There is also a big need among multicultural organizations—the Chinese association, the Afghan association, the Philippine organization, the Syrians, the Colombians, and so on and so forth—to establish themselves and begin the process of being part of the community. That requires a lot of support, and that is something we don't have in Newfoundland. We would love to see more activities that would encourage small organizations and ethnic organizations to be part of the whole process of making Canada our home.

On another topic, the process for internationally trained workers to gain recognition of their credentials in Canada is still confusing and slow. Professionals are really discouraged when they to find meaningful jobs, mainly because their qualifications are not being recognized readily and on time. That is another issue that requires support in the province. It requires more accessible information. Information is really scattered. Professionals have a big issue trying to find exactly what they need and how to carry on with this process.

Finally, mental health is another issue that requires strengthening in our province. Mental health is still in the early stages of being acknowledged as an issue that prevents newcomers to feel at home and to feel welcome. Services and supports are just now starting to consider that newcomers can develop different types of mental issues, or are arriving with them.

That is more or less what the Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Council, which is the organization for which I have been working for the last number of years, considers as key elements for us newcomers to feel welcome and to really feel we can be part of the community.

Thank you.

● (0955)

The Chair: Thank you very much. The committee will no doubt have questions for you.

[Translation]

Let us continue with Mr. Marcel, from Statistics Canada.

Please go ahead.

[English]

Mr. Laurent Martel (Director, Demography Division, Statistics Canada): Good morning. Thank you for this opportunity to provide to this committee some facts on demographics in Atlantic Canada.

I will focus today on four messages. First, an important shift occurred recently, as we've seen more deaths than births in Atlantic Canada. This means that future population growth in Atlantic Canada will have to come from other components, such as immigration or internal migration.

I will also show on the PowerPoint presentation that was distributed that in recent years the Atlantic provinces have had some issues related to attracting immigrants and in preventing their population from leaving to other provinces or territories of the country.

Finally, I will conclude by nuancing these trends and showing that some regions of Atlantic Canada are actually growing, mostly urban areas.

On slide 3 you can see that in 2013, for the first time, there were more deaths—the line in red—than births in the Atlantic provinces. Births are the line in green, leading to what we call negative natural increase. This is a first in Canadian demographics. Natural increase is actually negative for one region in the country.

According to Statistics Canada population projections, the gap between deaths and births could increase in coming years, basically due to an aging population. A large share of the population, mostly baby boomers, are now moving into their senior years where mortality rates are higher, leading to an increasing number of deaths in the Atlantic provinces, as elsewhere. Population growth is low, fertility is fairly stable, and the number of births is not increasing and is even showing a slight downward trend, which lead to this situation.

[Translation]

On slide 4, we see that, as a result, population growth in the Atlantic provinces has to come from sources other than growth—

[English]

The Chair: I'm going to interrupt you for a moment. Apparently, the slides are only photocopied on one side, and we're missing the back side.

● (1000)

Mr. Laurent Martel: I'm sorry.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Erica Pereira): We're getting them right now.

The Chair: I would ask that you continue, but that you don't assume committee members have the slides.

[Translation]

Mr. Laurent Martel: One of the slides shows that demographic growth in Canada is currently about 1%. That is the highest rate of demographic growth among G7 countries.

It should be noted that this national growth masks major regional differences. In recent years, the highest rate of demographic growth has been in the Prairie provinces. That is a first. The three Prairie provinces together have the highest demographic growth rate. The Atlantic provinces, on the other hand, have the lowest demographic growth, except for Prince Edward Island.

This figure shows the breakdown of demographic growth by three major factors. There is no natural increase in Atlantic Canada, since the death rate is now higher than the birth rate. The international migratory increase, that is, the net difference between immigrants and emigrants, is positive in all regions of the country, but in the Atlantic provinces, it is not enough to offset losses due to interprovincial migration or migration among the various provinces and territories. In Alberta, conversely, the natural increase, the international migratory increase, and the interprovincial migratory increase are all very strong, meaning that Alberta has strong demographic growth.

Another slide shows that the retention of recent immigrants is another challenge for Atlantic Canada. Just over 50% of the immigrants to Canada between 2000 and 2008 were still living in the Atlantic province where they had originally settled a few years later. In Ontario, 90% of the immigrants who had settled there were still living there a few years later. A higher proportion of recent immigrants to Atlantic Canada seem to leave for other regions of Canada than is the case elsewhere.

We also have a map providing a more detailed breakdown of the demographic profile of Atlantic Canada. Some parts of Atlantic Canada have relatively high demographic growth. Those are of course primarily urban areas such as Halifax, Moncton, St. John's and Charlottetown. On the whole, however, the population of Atlantic Canada is decreasing or showing negative growth.

The next slide illustrates certain patterns in domestic, interprovincial and interregional migration. It provides a breakdown of rural regions versus urban regions of Atlantic Canada. It clearly shows significant migratory losses in Atlantic Canada among young adults aged 18 to 28 years. Many of these young adults living in rural parts of Atlantic Canada leave for other parts of Canada or other parts of their province.

You might say that this is nothing new and that it has been a pattern for a long time. That is true, but the slides for the rural regions of the Prairies do not show such high levels of migration among young adults as we see in Atlantic Canada. There are specific demographic issues in Atlantic Canada as regards the retention of young adults from their early twenties to the age of about 28.

In conclusion, current demographic trends clearly point to growing differences among the various regions of Canada. This is essentially due to the fact that immigration is now the main factor in demographic growth; it is not natural increase any more.

We must recognize that Canada's regions are increasingly diverse demographically. These differences can be seen in demographic growth, demographic aging, and ethnocultural diversity, since immigrants to Canada settle in very specific regions, such as large cities.

In view of these demographic trends, one can expect the population's needs for public services, social programs, and infrastructure to vary increasingly from region to region of Canada.

• (1005)

In Atlantic Canada, for example, there might be greater challenges than elsewhere relating to the labour force and care and services for seniors, who will account for a larger share of the population than elsewhere.

Thank you for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

We will start with Mr. Whalen for seven minutes.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Rivera, for coming, and also thanks to Mr. Martel.

I have some questions for StatsCan just to start off. I'm wondering, first off, if we can see some of the data that's presented on the StatsCan website in terms of demographic information on a more refined basis than province by province. Does StatsCan have access to information that might help us either on a riding by riding basis or a postal code by postal code basis? How refined can we get the information?

Mr. Laurent Martel: Yes, the information is available on the Statistics Canada website free of charge, of course, and it's related to the 2016 census. There's a web page with all of the 2016 census results focusing on age and sex. In there you have differences in terms of, for example, the proportion of young adults, the proportion of seniors, the proportion of the most elderly, and the proportion of young children living in the different regions of Canada. We go all

the way down, for example, to what we call the census subdivisions, which are basically the municipalities across the country.

With this website you'll be able to compare, for example, the proportion of seniors living in a municipality in Atlantic Canada to any other municipality across the country, and that's very convenient.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Mr. Martel, with respect to the quarterly data that's published on the website, is that also available at the municipal level, or is that type of information less refined because it's not based on the census?

Mr. Laurent Martel: The information that we have in terms of population estimates in between censuses is available on a quarterly basis for the total population counts only, and age and sex once a year. Once a year we can get information all the way down to the census subdivisions. It's usually the population estimates based on July 1, and it's released every September.

Mr. Nick Whalen: There are three factors that I was just taking a look at. As compared to national versus international migration, when I look at some of the data for Atlantic Canada, it seems as if interprovincial migration is four to eight times more important in population growth than international migration. If I look at the annual numbers, for instance, immigration in Newfoundland and Labrador, it's plus about 500, but if I look at the quarterly data, it's minus 500 or even minus 5,000 in some quarters.

I'm just looking at this year's data, so when we're focusing on migration, are there any things we can look at that might help us in terms of not only retention of international migrants, but just retention of Canadians generally?

Mr. Laurent Martel: Usually, net international migration in the Atlantic provinces is positive, meaning that these regions receive more immigrants than there are emigrants leaving these regions. The net interprovincial migration rate is usually negative for these regions, meaning that there are more people leaving these areas for other places in Canada than people coming from other regions to establish themselves in the Atlantic region. Those are trends that we've seen for quite a while. For quite a few years it's been pretty stable.

When you want to have a look at the most recent trends, I would say the best data source is the population estimates released on an annual basis. I would suggest to focus, really, on the information that we release every September, because it includes the final data from IRCC and we use tax files to estimate internal migration, so you have something pretty solid and robust in terms of data quality.

These are the trends you want to look at to monitor or track down the changes in those patterns. Overall I would say these patterns have been fairly stable for the last 30 years.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Mr. Martel, now that we know that there's been net out-migration for the past 30 years and that the birth rates have gone below the death rates, which is a critical factor, when we're focusing on immigration, we've heard a lot of questions about whether or not we need to grow the labour demand before we grow the immigration, or how they work together. Does StatsCan have information or tools that can let us know whether immigration is a leading or a trailing indicator for economic growth, and how those two interrelate?

Immigration itself causes economic growth just by its nature, because there are more people in the economy. Do you have tools available for us to see? The reason I'm asking is that we want to know whether or not we're succeeding, and we want to know what to measure against. If we can change the trajectory, I would think that's success, but how do we know whether we've changed the trajectory when we have so many competing variables to look at? Do you have tools we can use that compare immigration and economic growth at the same time?

• (1010)

Mr. Laurent Martel: This is a really interesting question. Links between economic growth and demographic growth have been a long-standing debate in the field of demography. What are those links? It's been a debate for the last 400 years, basically, in the field of demography and population studies.

What I, as a demographer, can tell you is that there is certainly a link between the two. When we're observing—and that's my job—shifts in interprovincial migration patterns, we know that there's usually a link to economic shifts as well. A good example is what's happened in Alberta very recently. We've seen a decrease in the movements toward Alberta in terms of internal migration. We all know that recently the price of oil was slightly down. Economic growth was slowed down a bit in Alberta.

In the demography division, we don't have specific studies linking the two—

Mr. Nick Whalen: Thanks, Mr. Martel. If you don't have the studies—

Mr. Laurent Martel: No.

Mr. Nick Whalen: —I have one quick question for Mr. Rivera.

Mr. Rivera, your organization does great work in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly in the metro St. John's region, in helping new people start businesses and integrate into the community. If you were being asked to increase the level of service you're providing not just to 500 new immigrants per year, but to something like 2,000 or 5,000 new immigrants per year, how much additional resources would you need as an organization to offer those services to a population of newcomers about five times as large?

The Chair: Please answer very briefly.

Mr. Jose Rivera: RIAC has been working since 1983, and we can say that in the last 10 years we have seen a large number of people come through our doors seeking help. In the last three years, we saw around 1,000 people per year come to ask questions and ask for services. That is without our being able to reach out into the community, so there are still a large number of people outside who

don't avail themselves of services because they don't know that we exist and that other organizations exist.

Our budget for those thousand people is around \$200,000 a year. That's the way we work our budget. If we want to help a number of individuals, increase that; that would be the proportion, more or less.

Our problem is that the income we have is really unstable. We cannot focus properly on providing those services while we have to be out chasing money. If we could have a steady income that allowed us to do outreach, to go out and knock on doors and help those individuals who are homebound—they don't know that services exist—we would be able to spread the service.

The most important thing is to provide funding so that an information service can be developed, such that anybody—a nurse, a doctor, a police officer, or you as a member of Parliament—can find information easily on how to go about X or Y process, such as credential recognition, getting a driver's licence, or getting your children transferred from one school to another.

The three elements that drive people—

The Chair: I need you to bring this to a close with perhaps a last sentence or two.

Mr. Jose Rivera: Sorry?

The Chair: I need you to wrap this up. We're running out of time on this session.

• (1015)

Mr. Jose Rivera: I'm sorry about that.

The three elements that drive people out are employment, information, and transportation here in Newfoundland.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Maguire is next.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the panellists for their presentations as well.

Mr. Rivera, I have a quick question to start with. You mentioned that mental health was an issue with regard to the situation in St. John's. Can you elaborate on that?

Mr. Jose Rivera: Yes. Recently—in the last five years, we could say—the mental health issue has been on the agenda. Just two or three years ago, a non-profit group was formed to deal with the lack of mental health services. Newcomers in particular have no access to that kind of service for the main two reasons I already mentioned: lack of information and lack of services such as translation, interpretation, and navigation to the system.

Mental health has been a big drive for people to not stay in the province. They don't feel that there is a solution for them. We as newcomers oftentimes consider mental health taboo, something we don't talk about, something we don't disclose. That makes it hard for people to get a life and be active members of society.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Martel, you indicated that the death rate is higher than the birth rate for the first time. You said that was a first in Canada. Does that compare the territories or Nunavut in that area, as well?

Mr. Laurent Martel: It is not at all the case in the territories. The fertility rate is much higher than elsewhere. In Nunavut, for example, it is almost three children per woman, so the natural increase remains very strong in the territories, actually.

In the Atlantic provinces, it's happening for the first time in Canadian history. That's a very important aspect, which means that for the first time, deaths are now outnumbering births and the trend, or the gap, will increase in coming years. If these regions are to succeed in achieving a positive population growth, they'll not only have to bring some immigrants, but they'll have to keep bringing more and more over the years, because the natural increase is becoming more and more negative in the forthcoming years. All scenarios of our projections are showing exactly that.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Thank you.

I also understand from your statistics that one person in five is over the age of 65 in the Maritimes.

Mr. Laurent Martel: Yes. Those are the results from the 2016 census, which are the most recent results in the most recent census. I can confirm that one out of five in the Atlantic provinces is now 65 and over, in comparison to other provinces, such as Alberta, for example, where it's only 12%. There's an increasing diversity in terms of the different populations across Canada.

Mr. Larry Maguire: My own two children are both in Calgary. They left Manitoba. I think there are a number of reasons that Calgary is a younger city, if I can put it that way, or a younger region.

Yesterday Dr. Emery referred to the need for capital requirements to make sure that there are investments in jobs and it's not all private. His reference was even to caregivers as jobs in some of those areas, and the public sector and that sort of thing.

Three different areas have attracted people to Alberta. Their birth rates are higher, as you've said, and national and international migration have impacted that. Obviously if there are increased birth rates, there are lots of youth. There's national migration because there are sometimes better wages, particularly in the oil sector, which was very capital intensive, and the international immigrants come in as well because, even with all of that, there's still a shortage of workers.

Can you elaborate as to how that formation of capital impacts the demographics of people moving within our country? Has that got something to do with it?

Mr. Laurent Martel: I think you've said it all. The demographics of Alberta are really different right now. Part of the reason is that, yes, a lot of immigrants are coming to that province, and there are a lot of internal movers as well, with people leaving other places in Canada and going to Alberta. That has an impact on the fertility rate, as you're saying—rather, not on the fertility rate, but on the number of births that province can generate, because there are more females in their prime child-bearing years in that particular province than there are elsewhere.

We've just said that in Atlantic Canada, one out of five people is 65 and over, which also means that the proportion of females in their prime child-bearing years is lower than in other places, meaning that you don't generate as many births—

• (1020)

Mr. Larry Maguire: That was my point.

Mr. Laurent Martel: — in Atlantic Canada as you generate births in Alberta.

These patterns are making a huge difference in terms of the demographics of the different regions of Canada, especially Alberta, leading to these growing differences. I think that's one message I want this committee to remember. There are growing demographic differences between the different regions of the country.

Mr. Larry Maguire: What do you feel are the major reasons that can be used for retention in those areas, then?

Mr. Laurent Martel: As a demographer, I can say that when we see shifts in demographics, especially related to migration, very often it's because we've observed shifts in the economy of these regions before that. There's always a lag between the two, but usually we can see links between those two phenomena. I guess the future demographic trends in Atlantic Canada will be closely linked to economic trends there.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Rivera, the oil industry in Newfoundland is a capital-intensive business, but so is agriculture. I would mention this to Mr. Martel, as well. Agriculture is not just the production of the product and everything that goes with that on the farms; it's also the manufacturing of equipment and the export and transportation of the products for processing, both domestically and internationally.

Do you feel that some stability in a strong agricultural industry, as well as other capital-intensive industries, would particularly benefit Newfoundland?

Mr. Jose Rivera: As a matter of fact, newcomers have been part of an increasing agricultural production, and they're bringing new trends and products to the market. A large number of newcomers are working in start-ups and starting industries from perspectives that have never been dealt with locally in Newfoundland.

An interesting trend is in services provided locally for the oil and gas industry. Again, the lack of information for these start-ups prevents them from being more successful in a short period of time, but we have them.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Yes, and of course that would go for fishing in your particular region as well.

Recently I've had some experience with Iceland. The population there is about 330,000, two-thirds of it in Reykjavik, one major city. About 2.3 million tourists are coming through Iceland this year.

How big a role does tourism play in your markets, Mr. Martel? Is that a major industry in Canada because a lot of service industries are required there?

The Chair: Be very brief, either of you.

Mr. Jose Rivera: In our case, tourism is growing significantly here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Newcomers are playing a big role there, providing new services and new adventures in the province.

Mr. Laurent Martel: Unfortunately, I don't have that information with me at this point.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Kwan, you have about nine minutes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the presenters.

Mr. Martel, I'm wondering if you have information you can share with us on post-secondary education stats, particularly the spaces that are available, the comparison of tuition fees, and so on.

Mr. Laurent Martel: I wouldn't be able to comment on this as a demographer.

We do have statistics on education. I could find you the information.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I wonder whether we could get somebody in your department, perhaps not you, to share that information with us so that we can compare the Atlantic provinces with the rest of the country in terms of available post-secondary education spaces, the number of international students taking those spaces, the tuition fee rates, etc., so we can get a sense of what that looks like in those provinces.

• (1025)

Mr. Laurent Martel: Certainly. I will follow up.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much.

Mr. Rivera, thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Jose Rivera: You're welcome.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: What we're hearing from a lot of people is that there is a need to increase the population in the Atlantic provinces. Of course, as we just heard, if the death rate is higher than the birth rate, the long-term trajectory is just not a good one.

We agree that we need to increase the population, yet we also heard that there is a lack of infrastructure to support the immigrant and refugee population in the Atlantic provinces.

You come from that sector. You mention that you need core funding, which you don't have currently, to support the approximately 1,000 individuals in your community. If we're going to look at increasing those numbers, you're projecting that about \$200,000 per year per 1,000 people is what you need to increase your services.

Can you break down for us the kinds of services you need? You mentioned mental health support as one piece. Is language training an aspect of it? Can you elaborate on that for us?

Mr. Jose Rivera: When I mentioned \$200,000, Ms. Kwan, it's what RIAC would need to be able to look after a thousand individuals per year.

In terms of services, adults don't have access to English as a second language services in a volume that allows them to quickly

gain access to the labour market. In terms of services that an individual requires, it's more interpretation than language training. Translation and these kinds of services are required to be settled, to be organized, and to be put into the market. There's a good number of individuals who out of the goodness of their hearts go and do translation, but there is no professional I know of specifically for the mental health issues.

Post-secondary education requires a bit of a shakeup, because teenagers come here and are placed where they don't feel that they fit. People from Latin America, say, who come here and are placed in grade 10 have already seen all the subjects, so that is motivation for them to skip school and to go out and abandon education altogether. That is a trend that hasn't been seen in the numbers. This is something that families really are concerned about. They want their children to be able to stay in school and pursue a career.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: On that last point, you're saying that parents are concerned about students staying in the school system. Do you mean that high school dropout rates are a concern?

Mr. Jose Rivera: Yes, exactly. I don't know the tendency or the numbers, but some of the concerns the families bring to us are about how to keep their children, their teenagers, in school when they find that it's boring because they've already seen the topics. They feel that they're repeating and that the system does not help them to get ahead. On the numbers, I don't know.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I see. I guess what you're getting at, then, is the support network that's required for youth in the community and particularly even in the educational system, in the K-12 system.

Mr. Jose Rivera: Yes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I see.

Is there a table in your community where there is collaboration among the local, provincial, and federal governments in discussing how there could be a better strategy to support the refugee and immigrant population?

Mr. Jose Rivera: There is a program going on. There is the local immigration partnership with a number of organizations, but the focus of that particular group is more about welcoming communities and how to make people's lives easy in their day-to-day life. There is no specific focus on issues such as mental health and education at that table. It is something that is really sorely needed.

• (1030)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

I think it would be very helpful for our committee, if you don't have this information right now, to provide us with a list of organizations in your region that do resettlement services work and what programs are within it, so that we can get a glimpse of it.

Mr. Jose Rivera: There are only three of us. There's the Association for New Canadians, which is federally funded; us, the Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Council, which depends only on donations; and the Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador, which focuses mostly on women's issues. That's it.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: That's it? Okay. There's a lack of infrastructure, to be sure.

Mr. Martel, I wonder if, from a StatsCan point of view, you would have that information available as well for all the different regions in the Atlantic provinces in terms of what sorts of resettlement services are available and provided in those regions. Again, it's just so we can get a glimpse of it, of what that situation is. If we're going to be talking about the lack of infrastructure, we need to know what the baseline is and then build on that, both to attract and to retain new arrivals.

Mr. Laurent Martel: I will follow up, yes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much.

On the question around tourism opportunities or economic opportunities, I know that the government is aiming to make 2018 the year of tourism, so there's a lot of effort going on around that initiative. With respect to that, do you think there are actions the government could take to help further advance that tourism opportunity for the Atlantic provinces, Mr. Rivera?

Mr. Jose Rivera: We have seen individuals coming to our door and asking how to establish businesses, including tourism. There are individuals coming to us about tourist activities that are not regular here in Newfoundland. They have new ideas and new concepts to develop, but again the lack of a central hub of information is often what prevents us from helping them to find information to be able to develop those ideas.

The provincial government, I know, is making a big effort to develop tourism, but there is still a lack of connection between the street level and the planning and execution of things around here. Not only tourism but very many other fronts could be developed.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rivera.

We will go back to Mr. Tabbara for seven minutes, and then we'll be able to have one more Conservative question.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): My first question will be to Mr. Martel and Mr. Rivera.

I'm looking specifically at the numbers in Newfoundland and Labrador. In 1995 they had a population of roughly 567,000. I also want to compare that to investments and sales of goods manufactured. The population was roughly 567,000, and it was at roughly 530,000 in 2016. The investments in 1995 were \$3 million, and in 2016 they were \$12 million. Sales of manufactured goods in 1995 were \$1.6 million. That had increased in 2016 to \$4.7 million.

Mr. Martel, you mentioned previously when you were speaking to another colleague that there's a link between immigration and economic growth. Considering those numbers that I provided, can you elaborate on the link there? We see that there is potential for investments and manufactured goods; however, the population is still a force that's kind of hindering that advancement.

Mr. Laurent Martel: That's a good question, actually. I haven't really looked at numbers for investments and goods. I'm more familiar, I would say, with numbers related to the population. One thing I could say is that obviously the population in Newfoundland and Labrador, like the populations of Canada and the other provinces and territories, has changed over the last 25 years. The age structure,

in particular, is not the same anymore, and having different people means that they also consume different goods.

The consumption habits—what people are consuming as goods and services now in the Atlantic and elsewhere—are different from what they were 25 or 30 years ago when, for example, a larger share of the population was made up of young children. Young families don't consume the same goods as households in which there are seniors. There's definitely this to keep in mind, I would say. I'm not sure if I can say more about that, but there's definitely....

As the population gets older in the coming years, again, we expect to see shifts in how people consume goods.

• (1035)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Rivera, I'd like you to comment on the link between immigration and economic growth, as I stated earlier.

Mr. Jose Rivera: We have seen an increase in newcomer businesses here in the province. That is a visible trend. The more we have access to information and the more we have access to clear rules and clear regulations, the more chances there are that new start-ups, new businesses, and new productions will flourish here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: I want to go back to a meeting we had in the spring. On June 19, Mr. Adam Mugridge, from Louisbourg Seafoods Limited, testified that the labour shortage in rural communities persists because of people leaving the regions. What attempts have been made to make jobs for temporary foreign workers in seasonal industries into permanent jobs?

Mr. Martel, you can start off, and then I'll hand it over to Mr. Rivera.

Mr. Laurent Martel: I can only confirm as a demographer that in the Atlantic region we do see a greater proportion of young adults leaving these rural areas than we see elsewhere. One of my slides compares the rural areas of the Atlantic region to those located in the prairie provinces, and you obviously can see that the rates of out-migration are way higher in the Atlantic region.

That raises questions, I would say. Is this happening because there's a mismatch between the skills of the young adults and the labour market? It may be. I as a demographer don't have the answer, but definitely there's a different pattern in the Atlantic region than there is, for example, in the prairie provinces. Our numbers at Statistics Canada do confirm that.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: I'll get Mr. Rivera to answer this question.

In terms of retention of young international students, what measures have been taken by universities and colleges in partnership with provincial governments to keep their graduates within the region?

Mr. Rivera, could you comment on that?

Mr. Jose Rivera: We don't have very much access to that kind of legislation. It is brought up between provincial programming and Memorial University, but we see that the trend in the 1,000 people who come to us looking for help is that the transition from international student to permanent resident is really hard for them to pinpoint. Again, the three reasons that drive people out are lack of employment, lack of information, and lack of transportation. These same issues that apply to international students apply to many others.

As for temporary foreign workers in the rural areas, if we have still a big gap in services here in the capital city, you can imagine how it would be out in the rural areas. There are a lot of needs out there, but there is a Catch-22. If we have services there and there are no people, or we have more people and there are no services, where do we start? How do we break that Catch-22?

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Martel, can you send to the committee a list of how many students graduated in the Atlantic provinces, how many students stay within the region for one year, five years, 10 years, etc.? As well, could you compare that to other provinces in Canada?

• (1040)

The Chair: Do you mean international students?

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Students in general, both international and....

The Chair: Thank you. If you have that information, it would be helpful.

Mr. Laurent Martel: I'll follow up.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Saroya, you have about four and a half minutes.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Rivera and Mr. Martel, for coming.

Having more deaths than births is a concern in the Atlantic provinces. We know that part. Now the population is aging. From 2008, a number of immigrants came to Atlantic Canada, and then they left. This is an issue. What can we do? What can be done as a group, as parliamentarians, to retain them in the Atlantic provinces? Do you have anything, any strong suggestion as to what can we do to keep them in Atlantic Canada?

Mr. Laurent Martel: I can answer that from my perspective as a demographer. Immigrants in Canada settle mostly in large urban areas of the country. Previous studies have shown that part of the reason they are settling more into these large urban areas is the presence of an already existing community of immigrants in these areas. The immigrants are attracted by a community that already exists in these urban areas, so this is something to consider, for sure.

Then again I re-emphasize the fact that very often we see links between movements of population and movements in the economy. Again, Alberta is a good example. Fewer in-migrants are going to Alberta recently, and that's very likely related to the decline in oil prices and the slowing of the economy in Alberta over the last few months.

Those are definitely two trends to take into account in the consideration of your work.

Mr. Bob Saroya: We talk about the tourist industry. We talk about what else we can bring. There was the old system of an investment program, whereby people could come and invest in the east coast and Atlantic provinces. What do you think? What are your thoughts about bringing people in to invest in the Atlantic provinces? Could that help?

Mr. Laurent Martel: I wouldn't be able to comment on the tourism industry. I know very—

Mr. Bob Saroya: It could be any industry.

Mr. Laurent Martel: Again, I wouldn't be able to comment on a specific industry in the Atlantic provinces at this point.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Rivera, do you want to add something?

Mr. Jose Rivera: Business is about location, location, location. For retention, it's about information, information, information. That is key for us to be able to stay.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Chair, Nick wants to ask a question.

The Chair: Oh, how generous.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Thank you very much, Mr. Saroya.

Mr. Martel, Newfoundland and Labrador are experiencing a massive immigration problem that started in 1992 with the cod moratorium. The population dropped from 580,000 in 1992 to about 509,000 in 2007, when it started to rise again, but now it's falling again.

Is this an eco-crash? If you net out the effect of the population collapse as a result of the cod moratorium, you might find that the Atlantic region's situation is not as dire as we might think and that there is some hope for birth and death rates. It's this multi-generational issue of young people, age 20 to 40, who left the province for work, me included, and not many of us are able to return home. This is going to be seen for about another 30 years, and then we're going to be in a new demographic regime.

Can you comment on that as a demographic expert?

Mr. Laurent Martel: We project the population at the provincial level for the next 25 years. That's what Statistics Canada has done and is doing on a regular basis. The concern—and I'm coming back to more deaths than births—is about natural increase. Natural increase, according to all scenarios done in our projection, are showing that this should be getting worse in the coming years. The deficit of births to deaths should increase. That's regardless of how many immigrants there are in the Atlantic region and regardless of internal migration patterns. It's all going down. That's something you need to consider in this committee. This is a strong trend.

• (1045)

Mr. Nick Whalen: Mr. Martel, you're saying that the number of births per eligible child-bearing female is low and that we've reached a critical point regardless of any other demographic factor.

Mr. Laurent Martel: I'm more concerned about the fact that it's the number of deaths that is going up in the Atlantic region. It will go up as well in other regions of Canada, but fertility levels are sufficient in some other places to maintain this natural increase at a positive rate. In the Atlantic, the number of deaths is going up.

The baby boom was strong in the 1950s and 1960s there, and these people are moving into the older ages where the mortality rate is higher. The factor that drives the natural increase down is the increase in the number of deaths. That's something that should

continue. It's fairly predictable over the next few years as well, so there's not a lot of uncertainty related to this trend at this time.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

We're now over time. I will give a reminder that we are meeting again tonight.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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