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Chair

Mr. Robert Oliphant

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.)):
Good morning. I call the meeting to order.

[Translation]

Welcome everyone.

[English]

Welcome to the 77th meeting of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in our 42nd Parliament.

Today will be our last meeting hearing witnesses' testimony. We are continuing with respect to the order of reference on the study of immigration to Atlantic Canada, known as motion M-39.

We welcome all our witnesses. You're kind of the cleanup crew to make sure we have everything we need before we consider a report to Parliament, which we hope will further this issue for not only Atlantic Canada but for all Canadians who are concerned about this situation.

We will begin with Susan Wilson and Jeffrey Green, who are joining us through video conference from J.D. Irving in Saint John, New Brunswick.

You have seven minutes.

Mr. Jeffrey Green (Director, Talent Acquisition, J.D. Irving, Limited): Thank you.

On our slide deck, we'll reference slide number 3 to begin with.

J.D. Irving, Limited has a long, proud history of operations here in Atlantic Canada, particularly in the province of New Brunswick.

Our core business is forestry and forest products. As you can see, we're diversified across a number of industries, from construction and shipbuilding to retail and consumer products.

Moving ahead to slide number 4, you can see a snapshot of our projection for our workforce needs over the next three years up to 2019. It highlights that we have a number of job opportunities, career opportunities, with our projection being a little over 7,700 jobs to fill to 2019 in Atlantic Canada, with most of those jobs being here in New Brunswick.

Moving ahead to slide number 5, you can see a snapshot of a number of our jobs here in New Brunswick where the core requirements around education require high school, trade certifica-

tion, or a college degree. Our highlight here is that these are good jobs, local jobs. Our requirement is for an educated and skilled workforce to fill these roles.

Similarly, moving ahead to slide number 6, you can see our projection of almost 730 jobs in New Brunswick for which a university education will be required, again emphasizing an educated and skilled workforce. Most of those jobs, as you can see, are in engineering and finance, right at the top of the list.

From a strategy perspective, moving forward to slide number 7, our strategy for growing and building our workforce has four key pillars, starting with keeping folks at home. For us, that's about engaging the next generation workforce but also growing and developing our workforce here at home, and that's about building the skills and capability of the Atlantic Canada workforce.

One of our pillars is also looking to bring Atlantic Canadians home, whether that's from across Canada or elsewhere. Of course, the immigration piece, working to find people to make Atlantic Canada their home, would be the fourth pillar of our overall strategy.

Ms. Susan Wilson (Director, Human Resources, Sawmills and Woodlands Division, J.D. Irving, Limited): Moving to slide number 8, I'd like to talk a bit about specific attraction and retention challenges here in the Atlantic provinces.

First, related to current residents of Canada, candidates we speak to see a lack of opportunities, driven by perceived low growth of the economy in the area and high taxes. That would be something we would be having conversations about with our candidates within the Atlantic provinces or within Canada.

Specific, though, to the immigrant community, it is a challenge to build a cultural network in the Atlantic provinces significant enough to create a critical mass and attract immigrants to the area, specifically in consideration of larger centres such as Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver. The challenge of building a sense of belonging and creating those communities in Atlantic Canada is a particular challenge.

We move to slide number 8, which speaks specifically to the Atlantic immigration pilot. In our experience to date, it is a very good initiative, in our opinion, and it completely aligns with the strategies that Jeff laid out earlier. We've seen a significant improvement in the processing times to go through the immigration steps and improved support through both the federal and provincial governments.

I would speak specifically to strong partnerships on the provincial side. We've approved 19 candidates through the Atlantic immigration pilot to date, with 14 more in progress. Our numbers continue to go up specifically in the areas of truck driving, forestry operators, skilled trades, and IT.

What follows are recommendations from J.D. Irving related to the pilot.

We'd like to see continued support in finding more candidates and a more aggressive recruiting approach in partnership with our government, as opposed to a passive approach. We'd like to see assistance to employers to find the expertise and skills we're trying to source, and help for the candidates during the process through improving relationships with the candidates and through the government helping people through the steps of the immigration process.

Second, we are recommending an integrated access for employers to settlement services, what we're calling a one-stop shop to assist employers in seeking out and utilizing the settlement resources that are available to us.

Third, another area for opportunity would be criteria in the process that would assist employers with retention. Perhaps employers could have a means to secure new candidates to stay with their employer for a period of 18 to 24 months to help with retention.

Thank you. Those are our comments.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you very much.

I think slide 7 is quite clever, with the “keep them home, grow at home, bring them home, and make it home” idea. Someone did a good job on that.

Thank you.

We'll move to the City of Moncton.

Ms. Angelique Reddy-Kalala (Immigration Strategy Officer, City of Moncton): Good morning, everyone.

Thank you, *merci*, for allowing us to speak with you today on an issue that is of great importance to Monctonians.

Our community has been very active and innovative on ways to integrate immigrants. Through our experience with the Atlantic immigration pilot, we will outline ideas to increase immigration, attraction, integration, and retention.

[*Translation*]

Our community is trying to attract a significant number of immigrants over the next decade—15,000—just to ensure we can maintain our current population. To grow the economy, we need closer to 25,000 over the next 10 years. Currently, we attract approximately a thousand newcomers a year, and this does not

include the one thousand international students who are living in the city.

• (0855)

[*English*]

Moncton is a welcoming community and we are working hard to implement key initiatives and services for immigrants, but we also feel that changes in federal policy, along with financial support, would enable us to be even more efficient and effective in supporting immigrants and newcomers in the Moncton area. Moncton has hundreds of available positions in such key sectors as IT, finance, insurance, back office support, and tracking and logistics, just to name a few.

Mr. Charles Leger (Deputy Mayor, City of Moncton): To maximize our efforts, we wish to propose the following recommendations.

[*Translation*]

Having an on-site Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC, office in New Brunswick's largest city would provide immigrants and their families a direct contact that is badly needed. An on-site office would be key to having a lot of important questions answered quickly. We have experienced immigrants moving to larger centres because of the access to an IRCC office. Without one on site in Moncton, it makes retention all the more challenging.

Francophone immigration is a high priority in New Brunswick. Université de Moncton attracts French-speaking students from around the globe. This is one place where we have direct access to educated individuals who would stay under the right circumstances.

[*English*]

However, we need additional financial resources to integrate international students into the labour market. We must make it easier for them to become permanent residents through increased access to language training and support services during their studies so they can integrate more easily after graduation into the labour market. This alone would increase retention with a group that should be easy to integrate and employ.

[*Translation*]

The City of Moncton believes increased funding and support for settlement organizations, such as the Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area and Centre d'accueil et d'accompagnement francophone des immigrants du Sud-Est du Nouveau-Brunswick, would directly impact our retention levels. By reducing wait lists for language classes and day care spots, we can sooner enable spouses to find employment and build their lives in Moncton.

[English]

Support for ethnocultural associations and places of faith is another area we believe would offer a solid return on investment. There's no federal funding that we know of to help ethnocultural associations and places of worship support immigrant populations. This federal funding for support in a community like Moncton would have a significant impact.

In terms of the Atlantic immigration pilot, increased financial allocations will help grow our community. The city has been working diligently with our federal and provincial counterparts to identify employers. Although the pilot is new, from a Moncton perspective, what follow are the gaps that we see as the highest priority

Number one is that the Province of New Brunswick needs its own pre-arrival needs assessment service. We currently don't have a needs assessment or pre-arrival service in New Brunswick, yet we are best placed to provide the most accurate information on our cities and province. Allowing the province to administer its own service, or designating another agency to do so on its behalf, would improve service for newcomers and allow them to be better prepared prior to arrival.

Number two is increased support to employers. Immigration is still new in Atlantic Canada. More training and initiatives are key to getting employers on board. We need to find a way to directly support employers and to streamline and reduce complexities.

[Translation]

Number three is to expand the time limit for international students. Under the pilot, international students only have one year to secure employment to get their permanent resident status. At the same time, employers must complete all the necessary paperwork to allow them to gain this status. This is unrealistic for both parties. Increasing the current one-year application window to three years would make a significant difference in Moncton's ability to retain international students after they graduate.

Number four is to provide free language training for international students during their studies. Many of these students want to stay. The ability to improve their proficiency in one or both official languages would give them the tools needed to stay in our bilingual city and province.

• (0900)

[English]

Number five is on modifications to the Atlantic immigration program to include international students who are enrolled in a one-year diploma program in our community colleges. It is arguably these students who need the most assistance to fast-track their immigration process.

Number six is to provide accelerated and increased federal funding to settlement agencies to ensure that services are in line with new arrivals. We need to ensure a streamlined and efficient funding process to ensure that these agencies have the resources to do their important work.

Finally, number seven is to ensure that all employment opportunities are included under the Atlantic immigration pilot. For example, our hospitality sector has many unfilled support staff positions. Unfortunately, many of these positions do not qualify for the national occupation classification, NOC, skill levels. The pilot should include levels such as the NOC-D positions as well.

[Translation]

In conclusion, the City of Moncton would like to thank you for inviting us to speak today.

Despite the challenges we are facing, we are proud of the successes we've had welcoming immigrants. With some policy changes, creative solutions, and increased dialogue between us, we can be even more successful in welcoming immigrants and their families.

[English]

Population growth through immigration is essential for the long-term success of our community, and all communities in Canada. For New Brunswick, we need families and workers with diverse skills. We will do everything we can to make it easy for them to live, work, and play in our community.

Thank you very much for your attention.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much everyone.

We'll continue with Professor Yoshida and Professor Ramos.

[English]

Dr. Yoko Yoshida (Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University, As an Individual): Good morning. Thank you for inviting us to present to this committee.

I'm Yoko Yoshida, associate professor of sociology at Dalhousie University, and this is Howard Ramos, also a professor of sociology at Dalhousie University.

Our presentation this morning is based on the brief we submitted to this committee. We also have additional reports and information you can find on our website, perceptionsofchange.ca.

Today we will offer an overview of our analysis of the longitudinal immigration database, which captures landing records and tax records of immigrants. Our analysis focuses on immigrant tax filers in Atlantic Canadian provinces and compares the Atlantic Canadian immigrants to the national average.

We have several observations to share with you. First, recent economic principal applicants, one year after landing, have a higher rate of employment than the Canadian average in all but one province of Atlantic Canada. For example, nationally, 73% of economic principal applicants had a job one year after landing. That rate was 90% in Newfoundland and Labrador, 76% in Nova Scotia, and 74% in New Brunswick. Prince Edward Island was the only province that had a rate lower than the national average. Likewise, recent economic principal applicants had higher earnings, on average, than the national average in all but one Atlantic Canadian province. P.E.I. was the outlier.

Spouses and partners who come with the economic principal applicants, however, did not fare so well. Compared to the national average of the same category, they had lower rates of employment one year after landing in Canada.

In terms of earnings, the story is rather mixed. In Newfoundland and Labrador, they had higher earnings than the national average. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had almost the same as the Canadian average, only slightly higher. In Prince Edward Island, the same category of immigrants earned slightly less than the Canadian average.

Based on these findings, and also the fact that the Atlantic immigration pilot and to some degree the express entry system focus on employers playing a role in settlement, we believe that a key to the success of these programs is to tap into the employment potential of the spouses and partners, especially those who follow the principal applicants of the economic stream.

The story is slightly different for recent family-sponsored spouses and partners. They have better employment outcomes in Atlantic Canada compared to the national average. This happens across all the Atlantic provinces. They also have higher earnings than the Canadian national average in the equivalent categories. Prince Edward Island, however, was again a little lower than the national average.

Based on these results, we believe that much more can be done to promote the economic success of immigrants in the Atlantic region. Atlantic provinces need to bust the myths about the economic difficulties immigrants may face in the region. They need to challenge the stereotypes based on the experiences of earlier immigrant cohorts.

Howard has a few more points to share.

- (0905)

Dr. Howard Ramos (Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University, As an Individual): We have also observed that most of the trends for immigrants in the region are driven by successes we see in Atlantic Canadian cities rather than rural areas. Although we didn't, in the report that we submitted, look at urban/rural differences, this is something we've begun to examine in our other research and something that we've been looking at more generally as we've been working on these issues. In the report we submitted, we note that Prince Edward Island is the most rural of the Atlantic Canadian provinces and that immigration to the rural areas is a struggle for recent immigrants. This is something that needs to be considered.

When you look at the cities in the Atlantic region, you see they're doing fairly well. Unemployment rates in places like Moncton are below the national average. In Halifax they are competitive with the national average, and we suspect that employment for immigrants in those cities is going to be better than in rural areas. It's important to recognize that immigrants alone are not going to solve the problems of economy in rural areas. It's important to give immigrants a fair shot in the cities where the economy is working well.

Our demographic analysis of recent immigrant tax filers in Atlantic Canada shows that economic principal applicants are mostly men. The spouses and partners who come in the economic category, as well as family sponsor, are mostly women. We find that except for Prince Edward Island, most people migrating are of working age, and one thing that we see is that Atlantic Canada as a whole has a lower proportion of immigrants arriving with a university education. This is something we find surprising, given the high concentration of universities in the region. We recognize this as a missed opportunity for Atlantic Canadian provinces and for the federal government to promote a transition from university to employment and immigration in the region.

We also believe that the demographics suggest that the region can do more to diversify the intake of immigrants to the region, focusing on issues of gender, family reunification, and in particular on student transitions. We recognize that there are economic obstacles in Atlantic Canada, but we also recognize that, first and foremost, the problems the region is facing are demographic and that the solutions to the economic problems are really about solving the demographic problems. On this front, it's important for the region to try to compete against other regions in Canada and other countries to take advantage of the demographic differences we have in Atlantic Canada, rather than suffer from them.

We also recognize on this front that it's important for Atlantic Canadian provinces to embrace that unique demography and to consider anchoring effects—in other words, demography that leads to anchoring immigrants to the region, demography that promotes staying in the region rather than transitioning into other regions.

Last, we also recognize that it's important for the success of the Atlantic immigration pilot project as well as for immigration in the region more generally to have access to data. One of the obstacles we face as researchers is a lack of available data from Statistics Canada, and this is important in order to benchmark how immigrants are performing in the region. On this front, it's important to make sure that national surveys oversample the region so that we can begin to tweak and not just rely on the administrative data we were able to access because we work with the Province of Nova Scotia. It limits the number of researchers, businesses, and other people who can look at data if it's only accessible through the province or the federal government.

Thank you.

● (0910)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Haan, you're our last witness.

Dr. Michael Haan (Canada Research Chair in Migration and Ethnic Relations, Department of Sociology, Western University, As an Individual): Good morning, everyone. My name is Michael Haan, and I'm the Canada research chair in migration and ethnic relations at Western University.

My primary research interests are in the areas of immigrant recruitment, retention, and internal migration. I'm particularly interested in studying how research and policy can be used to effect changes in these domains, and I thank you for inviting me here today.

Coming to you today from London, Ontario, I may seem like an outsider to Atlantic Canada, but before I was at Western, I worked at the University of New Brunswick as the Canada research chair in population and social policy. I have worked with all four provincial governments in Atlantic Canada to increase success levels in terms of immigrant recruitment and retention, as have Howard and Yoko.

In preparation for today, I watched a lot of the footage from this committee—not all 77 sessions, but many of them. I'd like to put a finer point on one of the comments made on May 29 by the honourable David Tilson, who is not here today. He recalled high rates of out-migration from when he was studying at the University of New Brunswick, and I agree with him, but please allow me to provide you with a little bit more detail.

In 1951, Atlantic Canada was the heart of the Canadian baby boom, with each province posting fertility rates that ranged from between 4.8 and 5.1 children for every woman aged 15 to 64. Provincial governments at the time were fretting about how they would accommodate such huge population growth. Now, roughly 65 years later, the region occupies the bottom four spots, with fertility rates that range between 1.34 and 1.48 children per woman. Discussions today tend to centre on how the region will cope with population implosion rather than explosion.

Several things happened. What was most notable, however, was that in the 1960s and 1970s, nearly half of that earlier baby boom left the region—half. Forgive the morbid analogies, but that is a greater proportion than died in either World War, and it's approximately on par with the number of people who died from the black plague in the 1300s in Europe.

Most of the people who left Atlantic Canada headed west to capitalize on opportunities in the rest of the country, and capitalize they did. Citing statistics for only New Brunswick, I have found that those who left the province were twice as quick to own a business, three times as likely to have a university degree, and four times as likely to earn more than \$100,000 per year than those who stayed. I have no reason to suspect huge differences across Atlantic Canadian provinces. Where did these out-migrants build their successes? I think it was in many of the communities that you and I live in. Although some went back to the Atlantic, most didn't. They built their fortunes in the rest of Canada and they built fortunes for the rest of Canada.

Profound demographic change has, as Mr. Tilson noted, been the norm in Atlantic Canada. Does that then mean that this will always be the case or that we should give up on trying to change the region? I would argue that we should be rooting for Atlantic Canada, because it was the hard work of Atlantic Canadians that helped make the country as prosperous and dynamic as it is today. It just didn't happen in their province of birth as often as it needed to for that region to prosper.

The Atlantic immigration pilot is radical. There is no doubt about it. It removes requirements that continue to apply to the rest of the country. I would say that the question of whether the region should receive special treatment or not is probably misplaced. Instead, we should be asking whether the program is likely to work and whether or not Atlantic Canada should get the first crack at this type of immigration reform. I think, when you consider the demographic duty that the region has done for the country as a whole, it's the least we can do.

Also, aside from the provincial nominee program and parts of the express entry program, this is one of the first major initiatives that allows local labour markets to fill their own shortages. It used to be predominantly the federal government that made the choices about who entered the country, and by and large, they did a good job, but arguably, centralized programs did not necessarily take smaller, shallower labour markets into account as much they could have.

Much like the Atlantic immigration pilot is radical, there are other radical thoughts and experiments that might be worth considering. Please note that, to my knowledge, none of these is currently being contemplated.

First, current taxation rules dictate that individuals must pay taxes in the province in which they reside on December 31st of the taxation year. What this does is encourage people to move from high-tax provinces like those of Atlantic Canada to low-tax provinces like those in western Canada.

There's another way to think about taxation: to allow people to pay the marginal tax rate of the province where they perform the majority of their work. If, for most of the year, an individual flies to Alberta for a 21-day shift, then heads back to Cape Breton, couldn't they pay Alberta income tax rates in Nova Scotia?

● (0915)

True, the Nova Scotia government wouldn't get quite as much money as they would under their own tax regime, but it's a lot more money than the zero they'd get when the individual decides to go to a lower tax area.

Second, perhaps we need to think about retention more broadly. I understand that the pilot is focused on keeping newcomers in Atlantic Canada, but let's suppose that it doesn't work very well and that some people move elsewhere after a few years. Is this necessarily such a bad thing? As someone who has lived all over Canada, I can say with certainty that they'd be starting out in one of the kindest, most welcoming regions in Canada and that this would position them well if they chose to go elsewhere. That may increase national retention rates, even if it doesn't necessarily affect the provincial or regional rate.

If, conversely, the pilot works perfectly and does exactly what it's supposed to, then great. Package up the best pieces and use them in other parts of the country that are struggling with population decline. Neither of these outcomes seems negative to me.

The key to the success of the pilot, in my opinion, is that administrators espouse a "what works" strategy as much as possible. If the removal of work experience does not increase retention, for example, abolish or tweak those provisions. If students don't stay in the region after graduation, then reconsider including them as part of the pilot. We have the data and we can test these things.

Central to this is having an evaluative framework that is both nimble and non-partisan. The United Nations expects us to reach global peak population by about 2025. What this means is that the surplus of people from other countries will come to an end. That is only eight years from now. After that, expect the recruitment and retention of immigrants to become far more competitive on a global basis. The time to get it right is now, and I think we should be running at least one experiment like the Atlantic pilot at all times.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Did Mr. Whalen write your remarks? I'm just kidding.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): I will say thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank everyone for coming today and providing the final recommendations and information to the committee. It fully reiterates in many respects what we've heard all along, but I will add that some of Mr. Haan's comments are new. I would endorse them entirely, except perhaps some of the tax stuff.

The morbid tale also continues, and I just want to add a little bit of additional information, focused on one generation.

From 1992 until 2017 tells a slightly different tale, and you can see this information from StatsCan. The national population was 28

million; Newfoundland's population was 580,000; Prince Edward Island's population was 136,000; Nova Scotia's population rounds up to 920,000; and New Brunswick's population was 748,000.

Between then and July 1 of this year, 2017, the national population grew to 36.7 million, by 31%. Newfoundland's has fallen to 528,000, down 10%; Prince Edward Island—even though Dr. Ramos said that it was the most rural of the Atlantic provinces, I'm sure the people in Prince Edward Island disagree, because almost all of them live within 30 kilometres of Charlottetown or Summerside—posted fairly reasonable growth in our area, up to 152,000. It was flat in Nova Scotia, at 953,000 and flat in New Brunswick at 759,000.

Over the last generation, this has been a problem. Newfoundland has suffered the collapse that everyone else is looking at. We suffered the collapse because of the cod moratorium. Now we're suffering an eco-crash, but the demographics are clear. Now that births under-count deaths, it's something that's going to happen.

It's not just in Atlantic Canada; it's happening all over the world. Eastern Europe—our delegation just came back from Sofia, Bulgaria, and yesterday we met with the Croatian delegation—is also suffering from exactly the same migration trends that Atlantic Canada is suffering from. It's a worldwide problem, and I fully endorse Mr. Haan's comments about the competitive nature of seeking out highly qualified and skilled labour, because as we start to do this now, it will be Germany looking for those immigrants in 10 years, because they will not be able to get any more from Bulgaria.

There was a very interesting paper published this past month by Alvin Simms and Jamie Ward of the Harris Centre regional analytics laboratory, "Regional Population Projections for Newfoundland and Labrador 2016 to 2036". They take a look at lots of different measures, and they include all the labour-related endorsements that try to fill the labour positions as they're available under all different scenarios. Even under the highest labour replacement scenarios, which is a large driver for immigration, Newfoundland and Labrador still loses 4% of its population over the next 20 years, but anyone who takes a realistic view of it sees that we lose 10% or more of our population. It's another collapse.

In order for us to maintain our standards of living, this is an imperative, so I ask all the witnesses, given that we've now had 25 years of stagnant or falling growth, what can we do differently? Could the Atlantic immigration pilot be the silver bullet to help us? Is it something we should do?

I'll start with Mr. Haan.

• (0920)

Dr. Michael Haan: Thank you for your comments.

I think the short story is that there is no silver bullet. We probably have to try various strategies to bring people to the region and to bring people back to the region. No matter what, under all projection scenarios by Statistics Canada, there will need to be some economic restructuring, and I think all four Atlantic provinces are going to have to have very serious discussions about what this will mean moving forward.

The Atlantic immigration pilot is at best a partial solution. There will be change while it is under way. In terms of doing things differently, I think I would go back to my concluding comment that the whole framework needs to be incredibly nimble so that precious time is not lost if something is found to not be effective.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Dr. Yoshida, would you comment?

Dr. Yoko Yoshida: Adding to that, my position is to look into the family settlement of immigrants as a unit of family. When you come to Nova Scotia and Canada all together, just because one person is working and settled in a labour market really doesn't hold those people in the region. I think that immigrants' decision-making is based on household well-being rather than individual well-being.

When the local economy is not as competitive as other markets, perhaps until the market becomes competitive enough, diversifying the portfolio of immigrant streams could be a way to go. Rather than focusing solely on the high-flying, highly skilled, talented people, perhaps you should look into people who are likely to stay in the region as a family or as a neighbour and start building society at the same time as you are developing the economy so that it becomes a more competitive market relative to others.

Essentially, look into family settlements and providing help for spouses and partners with employment opportunities, etc.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Thank you very much, Dr. Yoshida.

Maybe that will get me on a different tack. I have some questions for the folks from J.D. Irving. I'm a big proponent of targets based on retention rates for immigration so that the Atlantic region would equitably benefit from immigration by having a higher number. That might also help accommodate the establishment of cultural communities that will welcome further industries and further immigrants, but then I also wonder about labour demand.

To the folks from J.D. Irving, how much labour demand do you feel we have in our region so that we can realistically accommodate 1% or 2% immigration growth? At the same time, if we don't fill the positions you've identified as already needing to be filled by immigration, what happens to your business if you can't fill these spots?

Thank you.

Ms. Susan Wilson: To answer the first question, the labour demand is a clear gap today. In other businesses in J.D. Irving, we have examples today, to answer the second part of your question, of having to cut back on some of our production shifts because we do not have the labour in the facilities to meet all the demands of our customers. It is live; it is today.

For the foreseeable future, based on the numbers shared earlier, we do not see an issue with placing people, and I would broaden that to the earlier comments around broader placement of members of the family. We have such a variety of gaps in different functions, including, as we talked about earlier, from IT down to the manufacturing jobs on the floor, that I think there is a huge opportunity to address the needs of the entire family.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Thank you for your input.

The Chair: Mr. Maguire is next.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): First of all, I want to thank all the panellists for the presentations they've made. It's been very informative. Thanks very much.

To the Irving Limited folks here, in regard to creating employment, we've had presentations to the committee, even in the short while that I've been on it, indicating that job creation comes from capital investment. Dr. Emery mentioned that a couple of days ago here in our committee as well.

Can you indicate to our committee here your thoughts with regard to job creation? I know you've done a lot of it with your investments, and not just in the refining industry but in other sectors as well. The recent decision to cancel the energy east pipeline is detrimental to the development of the Maritimes as well as to the processing and manufacturing of our own Canadian product here. I wonder if you can indicate to us your thoughts in regard to that lack of capital investment that's going to occur in eastern Canada because of that cancellation, and how that's going to impact job creation in the Maritimes and therefore the need for more immigration.

• (0925)

Mr. Jeffrey Green: Certainly capital investment is an important factor. In particular, in our workforce forecast we look at not only attrition and retirements but at what's driving growth. Almost a quarter of our forecast is forecasted around growth. Capital investment and those sorts of things in the region, in each province, are an important factor for sure.

Mr. Larry Maguire: The taxation decisions that the government has made lately on corporations and different parts of your industry as well are not going to help development in many areas, and not just in the Maritimes but across the country.

I'm from Manitoba, but having spent a limited amount of time in the Maritimes, I have to agree with your other panellists that it's a tremendous part of Canada and a great place to live and be. However, if we continue to go down the road of increasing taxation on corporations and family businesses, can you just elaborate on your thoughts as to how we could enhance bringing people in through a taxation process rather than just increasing taxes on these types of companies?

Mr. Jeffrey Green: Certainly that has the potential to be an impact on attracting people to the Atlantic Canadian region and retaining them. I don't know if I can speak specifically on some of the policies and those sorts of things, but I would say in general that the tax issue has to be addressed, especially if we're going to continue to attract and retain new people, new immigrants, in Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Larry Maguire: I'd like to direct a question to Mr. Leger as well in regard to your points about retention. Of the seven that you mentioned, what do you think are the key ones if you had one or two that you would like to see implemented?

Mr. Charles Leger: I think what we're really seeing is a fair amount of immigration already in Moncton. In the case of the international students at the University of Moncton, probably the predominant factor for us is some language assistance so that we could offer individuals who graduate from local universities—and we're not alone in that—the support that the students need to be able to enter the workforce. That one is extremely important, along with taking a look at what we do to make the transition much easier for people who immigrate here.

Angelique, who is our immigration strategist, can probably enlighten us a little bit more on what she sees. We've had a lot of really good feedback on the Atlantic immigration pilot, so perhaps she can mention one or two things.

Ms. Angelique Reddy-Kalala: The reality in the Moncton region is that we're growing very quickly. At any time we have likely over a thousand positions available. The employers that we work closely with are very interested in immigration. They could certainly use additional employer supports. As immigration is still new to Atlantic Canada, we've seen immense increases over the last 10 years.

I certainly agree with all of the points that J.D.I. and the researchers are making, and I agree with focusing on the spouse as well. I think the pilot really allows us to think outside of the box, too, which is really what we need for the entire country. We need to start to take a look more at the ethnocultural associations and places of faith as a support mechanism to the integration of newcomers and make sure we're building diasporas within our community so that when immigrants do arrive in Atlantic Canada within our cities, they are well supported not just by the settlement agencies and the municipalities, but also by their local communities, whether they start to integrate with the ethnocultural communities or their places of faith. Those are key elements that allow immigrants, when they arrive, to integrate in our community.

• (0930)

Mr. Charles Leger: We've had a lot of success with job fairs, where we've initiated opportunities for employers to meet recent immigrants and try to find a match. I think that's really important as well, because as a community, one of our challenges is our own

population embracing what's happening and allowing us all collectively to work together.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Saroya, you can have a question here.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): We heard over and over from a number of panels on the issue of the rural and eastern parts of the Atlantic provinces. What can be done? What can we do to make sure it's well balanced and people feel safe and feel good and have jobs, and we can retain them in the rural areas, so the whole situation is balanced?

The Chair: I can give you about 20 seconds to respond.

Dr. Howard Ramos: I think the answer is really about being bold and focusing on hubs. If hubs such as Moncton or Halifax or St. John's do well, the rural areas will do well. The settlement service providers in those hubs are very successful, as was just mentioned, because they're big enough and small enough. They're big enough to offer a full complement of services, but small enough to make the direct tap into specific businesses, and not just the bigger companies but also the smaller and medium-sized ones.

The Chair: Ms. Kwan, you have about seven and a half minutes.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for your presentations.

I think we're all in agreement that we need to enhance immigration numbers. I know there's been a lot of discussion around the pilot. The pilot is important, although we heard on Tuesday night on the ground that the pilot has not yielded those kinds of results. It's cumbersome, it's bureaucratic, and it's problematic.

From that perspective, should we be looking at an immigration policy shift? Instead of looking at temporary foreign workers programming, should we move into more of a permanent residence programming? Then in that instance people would have the opportunity not only to come to work for themselves, but they could bring their families immediately. If you had a family here, you could grow your family, and so on.

From that perspective, I would like to get some comments from the witnesses around the table here. I could start with Professor Yoshida, because you mentioned the importance of family and how to grow that in terms of retention particularly.

Dr. Yoko Yoshida: In terms of the temporary and the permanent, I think the important issue is to open the options to the temporary worker for permanent residency. In a way, the temporary workers are already building their network through their employment as well as their community, and if they wish to stay in the long term, then there might be a higher likelihood of staying in the region, because they have already lived the experience in the local area. That might help bring immigrants who are likely to stay, so there would be an increase in the retention as well.

I'll stop there.

• (0935)

Dr. Howard Ramos: I would also like to quickly add that it's also important to expand the NOC categories in that transition, so it would be not just the high-flying workers but also the workers who are going to work in lower NOC categories, because they are the ones who are most likely to stay.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: We used to have a program in Canada called the Canadian experience class immigration program. A range of different people would come and apply as a permanent resident right from the get-go with a whole range of skill sets: high, low, medium, and everything in between.

However, we've done away with that, opting for other programming. It seems to me that maybe it's time for us to go back to that program and bring in permanent residents. I wonder if Mr. Haan could respond.

Dr. Michael Haan: I have a couple of points. One of the points I'd like to make is it really goes back to what works as a strategy. In the case of the federal experience class immigration program, we can identify the individuals who were admitted under those admission categories and identify whether or not they are more likely to remain in an area where they started out or if they are more highly mobile.

I think the decision about whether to bring the program back would rest heavily on whether it worked in the first place, and it sounds as if you have some evidence to suggest that it did. We can look at the earnings profiles of people under that admission category and whether they stuck around, and if it turns out that this is an effective program, then I do believe it's worthwhile considering bringing it back.

On another point, though, you mentioned in your first question about whether we need to see a shift in immigration policy. We've already had some pretty radical changes in the immigration system, particularly under the previous government. The minister at the time made sweeping changes to how immigration policies are implemented and how they work, and I think it might be worthwhile to take a look at how effective these changes have been.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: When I talk about the shift, I'm mostly thinking about the heavy concentration from the previous administration on the temporary foreign workers. I don't think that served the Canadian population very well. What we heard from previous panels is that they really want these individuals to stay. In fact, employers themselves say they would rather have a direct policy that says they can come and stay, that they can bring their families and stay, as opposed to going through this temporary process of seeing whether or not they can stay and whether they can bring their families, which

often becomes a barrier. That's what I'm talking about in terms of that shift.

I'm going to go to the folks on the video conference.

There was a lot of talk about the need to ensure that communities provide the infrastructure to retain individuals so that people can build communities. From that perspective, people on the ground who live in the community, the employers, and the local government representatives know that very well.

We also heard from previous panels about resettlement services. The absurdity of it is that the resettlement services in the community cannot provide the plan of resettlement. They have to rely on the big five that the government identifies outside of the Atlantic provinces, which is counterintuitive, to say the least.

I wonder if I could get some comments around this. Would it benefit, for example, if the government looked at infrastructure programs in terms of supporting communities to build the kind of support systems that would be required to help maintain and retain not only immigrants, but, I would argue, Canadians who are already there in those regions?

We'll go to the folks on video conference, and I would like Mr. Leger to start.

Mr. Charles Leger: I think our experience with the pilot so far has shown that there are multiple components in this approach, certainly in the support and the processes you touched on, the settlement process and so on. I'm involved with the Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area, and certainly there are some challenges, no question.

Maybe Angelique can touch more on some of the things. We have some initiatives. For example, we've opened a branch office in a northern New Brunswick community north of Moncton to help with some of the transition that they're seeing with respect to having jobs available but no one to fill the jobs.

• (0940)

Ms. Angelique Reddy-Kalala: Your perspective around policy is very interesting. To one of your points on pre-arrival services, you mentioned the big five, the five other cities outside of New Brunswick, and we do see that as a barrier in New Brunswick. Our settlement agencies have expressed that as well. The Province of New Brunswick is extremely active, and they are doing, from our perception, a very good job on the pilot in terms of employer recruitment and support. If they could do the pre-arrival services themselves, our province is best placed to talk about our own cities, and that would allow the immigrants prior to arrival to be able to better prepare themselves and their families to come.

In terms of infrastructure, we certainly agree with that. If we're going to be bringing in more people to New Brunswick—which we're working on very, very hard, particularly in the Moncton area—our settlement agencies need to be able to access funding very quickly to make sure that when immigrants do come, we not only have the primary applicant working, which is fantastic, but also the spouse. They need to be able to get into language classes very quickly. Oftentimes, from what we see, they're also coming with young families, so childminding on site to expand that would be huge.

The Chair: I think I need to cut you off there. I'm sorry that we're well over the limit on that one, but thank you very much.

We'll now turn to Ms. Zahid for about eight minutes.

You have about eight and a half minutes, if I'm balancing.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. I'll share some time with Mr. Whalen.

Thanks to all of you for coming today.

My first question is to both Professor Yoshida and Professor Ramos. I would like to talk about international students. We all know that Atlantic Canada has a lot of universities and colleges, and students from around the world go there. They spend two to four years in Canada. They get integrated into our society, and many of those international students would like to stay. They would seem to be the prime candidates for retention after graduation.

Do you see any barriers to the retention of international students? Do you have any suggestions on what we can do to ensure that more of them stay in Canada, especially in Atlantic Canada? Do you have any data or research on the retention of international students and what affects their decision to stay or not to stay in Atlantic Canada?

Dr. Howard Ramos: We're just beginning to look at whether or not international students stay or don't stay. A report came out last week, I believe, on international students, showing how many stay and leave, and I think about 25% to 30% would stay or were interested in staying in Canada versus the majority who want to leave. Still, that's an important share of people to potentially attract to stay in the region, especially given how many universities are in the region and the labour needs of employers.

I've had a Ph.D. student working on the issue, and I think the biggest obstacle I've seen is that the complexity of Canada's immigration system is often very daunting for university students, and they are unsure which program to apply to, whether it's the provincial programs or the over 50 options available in the federal system.

The most important thing that could be done on this front is offering better support to students to navigate the complexity of the system.

Dr. Yoko Yoshida: As Howard mentioned, one of the obstacles to retaining these international students is to create some sort of match with the jobs available in the local area, as well as an awareness of the availability of those jobs among the students.

Even if there are opportunities, students are not necessarily aware of where to go to find that information, so there is a slight disconnect in job availability. I think these days universities are working with

the community as well as businesses and providing job fairs, and those are probably very important venues to explore further.

That said, I am launching new research looking at whether or not the experience in Atlantic universities is turning into permanent residency, and after they become permanent residents, whether or not the prior experience as a temporary resident, such as being a student or a temporary worker, is likely to influence them to stay in the region or if they're more likely to migrate elsewhere for better opportunities. I am just looking at the data for that information.

● (0945)

Dr. Michael Haan: Very briefly, I'm also working on a report for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency on the retention of international students in Atlantic Canada. The project is under way, but it's in draft format. It may be possible that I could produce an advance copy for the committee if you find it useful.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: That would be really great.

Dr. Michael Haan: Sure. It's done with Victoria Esses, Chedly Belkhdola, and Sonia Nguyen.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you.

Ms. Yoshida, you talked about the integration of families. Many of the international students come with their families. Are there any suggestions about what we can do to integrate their spouses or their families so we have a better retention rate?

Dr. Yoko Yoshida: What can we do? If you are a permanent resident or already in Canada and your spouse comes to join you, the people who are sponsored to join family members tend to do well. They already have a foot in the door of the community.

The important thing is to help family members who are not accompanying the international students or the newcomers themselves. It's essential to plug in one of the people in the family to the local community.

Dr. Howard Ramos: I will add that another element to remember is that the students are quite young, and it's important to give opportunities for them to sponsor their parents and grandparents who are also young. A 20-year-old student whose parent is 50 represents an opportunity to have people come into the labour force, so it's important to make sure those pathways open up again.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you.

I'll share my time with Mr. Whalen.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Thank you very much, Ms. Zahid.

Dr. Haan, in quantifying the issue around interprovincial migration, you provided some interesting information during your speech. It formalizes or quantifies what some of us always thought, which is that the more entrepreneurial people who take the leap and move to another part of the country tend to do better than the average. Did you say their GDP per capita was around \$100,000? Is that the number you were using?

Dr. Michael Haan: The number I cited was that they were four times as likely to earn more than \$100,000 if they left their province of birth in Atlantic Canada versus staying in their province of birth in Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Nick Whalen: That's pretty incredible. We have a generation of people who went out and made fortunes, and some of them are going to start to retire soon. You talked about the migrations during the 1960s. The migration that I talked about in the early 1990s would have been the 20- to 40-year-old cohort. Some of them are going to move home. Is there going to be a net negative economic impact associated with retirees moving home, or is that going to be a positive because they're going to be bringing their capital with them?

Dr. Michael Haan: I would argue that it's a positive, and it is indeed beginning to happen. The baby boomers started to retire in 2011, and we are seeing some evidence of return migration. It's particularly strong in Prince Edward Island, but it is happening in other Atlantic provinces.

Mr. Nick Whalen: I see many friends of my parents from their old school days moving home and buying homes. Is this an aspect of social planning that we need to consider? If we can attract large numbers of retirees bringing their pensions home to Atlantic Canada to spend and make sure we're providing the services they need, could that provide an economic lift?

Dr. Michael Haan: It has great potential. I can't answer that question as a yes or no, but it's certainly worth investigating.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Okay, well, maybe it's something for a study by the human resources, skills and social development committee.

Thank you very much, Mr. Haan.

I have one final question, if I can squeeze it in.

Retention is such an important part of this piece, but it also requires a willingness of the local community to engage. Over the past couple of years, we've seen a real flux internationally in the view of immigration and how willing people are to accept it. I know Liberals won all the seats in Atlantic Canada on a strongly pro-immigration platform, but that wasn't the only issue.

In your hearts, do you feel that Atlantic Canadians are prepared to accept one to two percent immigration over the next 15 to 20 years

and allow these communities to settle, or do you see resistance? Just answer honestly, please.

I'll start with Dr. Yoshida and maybe move to the J.D.I. folks.

Dr. Yoko Yoshida: Well, my gut instinct, based on my experience living there for the last 12 years, tells me I see a huge difference between 12 years ago and now. Yes, we are ready.

● (0950)

Ms. Susan Wilson: I'd like to comment on that. We've seen a very positive response to some of the things we did initially, and to be honest, it's more positive than we anticipated. We're currently seeing less resistance than we were preparing for in some of our communities.

With that said, I strongly believe that it has to be an orchestrated partnership with the employer community, to the point that Angelique was making earlier. It is possible—

Mr. Nick Whalen: Thank you. That's very heartening.

I want to get a quick comment from the folks in Moncton to see if they agree. This is great news. I just want to make sure it's resounding.

Mr. Charles Leger: I would agree, but it's really important that the city be involved and that they add staff and do things that are really trying to help on an individual basis. The cities have to go out there as well. It's not all going to be reliant on industry.

The last thing is that university partnerships with businesses would be huge in terms of retention of students.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank all of the witnesses.

I want to mention that if anybody has anything in writing that they think we should consider, including members of the committee, I'd like a deadline of 5 p.m. today.

You mentioned the Harris Centre report, and a few people have mentioned other things. If you think there's anything we should read or have our analysts read for us, it would be needed by 5 p.m. today so that we can finish our study.

Thank you to all the witnesses. I quite liked the Moncton city mug product placement in the video, Deputy Mayor. You should be very happy with your staff for doing that.

Thank you all for joining us. We're going to end this part of the meeting and move into an in camera meeting.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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